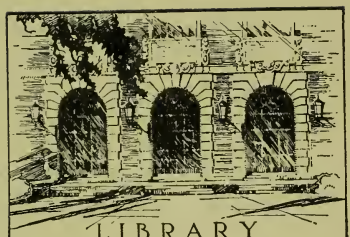

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To Dr Burnett

from the author's daughter

Grace Deane

Vol 57

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

BY

JOHN DOUGLAS.

"Some rise by sin; and some by virtue fall."
—"MEASURE FOR MEASURE."

"Par divers moyens on arrive à pareille fin."
—MONTAIGNE.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
SWAN SONNENSCHEIN, LE BAS & LOWREY,
PATERNOSTER SQUARE.
—
1886.

" The fixed arithmic of the universe,

" Which meteth good for good and ill for ill,

" Measure for measure, unto deeds, words, thoughts;

" Watchful, aware, implacable, unmoved;

" Making all futures fruits of all the pasts."

—"The Light of Asia," Edwin Arnold.

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In Memoriam

WALTER HERIOT DOUGLAS.

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CHAPTER I.

REJECTED ADDRESSES.

"The kindest man,
The best conditioned and unwearied spirit
In doing courtesies."

Merchant of Venice.

ANYONE who knows the good city of St. Mungo, knows "The Crescents" which curve up the sunward slope of a pleasant hill at the western end of Sauchiehall Street. They commence with those handsome and substantial houses in the angle behind St. George's Road, and culminate in the splendid mansions which crown the terraces overlooking the park. This is a pleasant region of quiet and even somnolent prosperity, an urban rendering of the land

"In which it seemèd always afternoon,"

enisled by broad and languid thoroughfares which divide it from other regions hardly less slumbrous, albeit falling short, perhaps, of the supreme social attainment—the respectability *in excelsis* of the Crescents themselves. Beyond—

northward, eastward, southward—is the roar and the throng and the turmoil of the city:—smoke of its torment rising up for ever—the very cloud-pillar of Progress. A somewhat unsavoury cloud-pillar, it must be confessed, much given to collapsing upon the rear of the Industrial Israel camped on the lower ground towards the river. On the whole it might be an advantage, in more senses than one, if Progress consumed its own smoke. In the multifarious and many-sided life of the great city, the modern gospel of averages finds its justification, not by faith, but in sight of manifold differences in individual satisfactions. One man's gain is compensated in many another's exceeding need—the Olympian ease of the Crescents correlates the squalor of the Kennels. Nay more. The duality even appears in the conditions of individual lives. The mechanical, supply-and-demand providence, which gives to the masses their daily bread, gives them no less therewith, their daily portion of carbonic acid and its concomitants. But of all this the Crescents know nothing. Night by night, the city is ringed with fire: the Pharos light of the smelting-furnace, the volcanic glow of the forge, flare into the dark till the low heaven is

aglow with the sullen splendour of slow-pulsing clouds of flame. Day by day is made hideous with the shrieking of shearing metal, the clangour of riveted plates, the whirring of myriad-spindled looms, the chaffering of the Market Place; but these—these are afar off, and the Crescents are peaceful.

"Archibald Keith, Esq., 33, Bankside Crescent," was thus a highly-respectable address even for a highly-respectable Glasgow merchant. The house stood well up the slope of the hill, and had a pleasant outlook between the greenery of two squares, and over the houses below them, away to the winding river-reaches and the Renfrewshire hills. It was just the house to give one a sense of easy-going opulence, of gentle life and almost cloistral peace. A hermitage might be duller, it could hardly be more still. To this house, while he was still comparatively a young man, Archibald Keith had brought his dearly-loved wife and his little six-year-old daughter. And when, after a few happy years, the good wife died, instead of joining in the westward migrations of his contemporaries, he remained in the old house for the sake of its loving and tender memories. There are men

so true of heart that even the loss of their Belovèds cannot dry up the springs of their affection, and who, for the sake of lost dear ones, are the kinder to "all sorts and conditions of men." Of such was Archibald Keith. He was not a demonstrative man, and Mrs. Grundy hardly considered him sufficiently affected by the loss of his wife. But in the city it was observed that he had lost something of his business energy as well. Nevertheless he prospered.

One other woman had shared his heart with his wife—his sister Helen, who had married his friend Dr. Dunbar. Both were dead, but each had left him a legacy—his wife the little golden-haired Elsie; and Helen her son, his namesake Keith Dunbar. So Archibald Keith lavished his love and care on these children, and they rewarded him with an intensity of affection to which few parents can show claim. He also gave much attention to the administration of various charities, which, with his fine and continually increasing collection of oil-paintings, absorbed an appreciable portion of his income. For the rest, he was known as a shrewd, cautious, somewhat silent man, sociable enough

in a quiet way, and full of a pleasant half-caustic humour in conversation. For his appearance—well, at the time of this story, he is somewhere about the fifties. A quiet-looking man, over the middle height, with iron-grey hair and beard, heavy dark eyebrows, and deep-set grey eyes. His worn, pale face is furrowed with the lines of many sorrows, and is still full of quiet cheerfulness and content. He has not attained the aldermanic rotundity of the successful merchant, nor has he fallen away to the meagreness of Romeo's Apothecary.

His nephew, Keith Dunbar, M.D. (æt. 23), may be described for the same epoch, as a tall, well-made, fair-haired, fair-complexioned young fellow, with a pleasant, frank face. He has a great likeness to his uncle, especially about his deep-set grey eyes; but his fine features and contours somewhat mask the real power and concentration which are essential characteristics of his expression. We make Master Keith's acquaintance on a pleasant afternoon in early summer. He has been abroad for a couple of years, studying at various celebrated laboratories, and has not been long enough at home to have got settled down to serious work, and so we find

him sitting in his snuggery, amusing himself with the current number of the *Westminster Review*. This snuggery is a pleasant room upstairs, on the drawing-room floor—well lighted by windows on two sides—the house stands at the corner of a cross street. Dwarf bookcases and cabinets to match, a writing-table and several easychairs, with a few good paintings, constitute the furnishing of the room. "Keith's Room," as it was called, had, in fact, become the snuggery for the household. Elsie was fond of sitting there, and her father used it more than he did his library, which was supposed to be his especial sanctum. When he bought a new picture it had to undergo a sort of probation on an easel in Keith's room till its place in the collection was determined. Such a picture was on the easel on this afternoon, and Keith, having come to the end of his article, was lazily looking at it—the picture—and wondering how the artist had come by its scientific truth, when the door opened and Uncle Archie came in. Keith rose and stood talking to him as they selected cigars from a box on the writing-table. But before the cigars were lighted they compared notes about the picture, and then they wheeled chairs to the open window and settled down to smoke.

"Do you know where Elsie has gone?" asked Mr. Keith, after blowing his first cloud.

"To the Park, I think, with Mrs. Challoner and Mary."

"Is Tom with them, do you know?"

"I don't fancy he is. This is Saturday, isn't it? So Tom is pretty sure to be cricketing. If Mrs. Challoner wants to show him off in the Park, it strikes me she will have to choose an afternoon when there is no match on. Tom is captain this year, you know."

"Ah, yes, so he is. Do you know, Keith, I don't think it would do you any harm to play with them this season if you can find time."

"I daresay I could find the time if I could find the interest. You see, I have been so long away that I have dropped out of the set a good deal, and I have so many interests now. Besides it will soon be time to go to Rosebank."

"Ah, talking of Rosebank reminds me," said Mr. Keith. "What about your own plans? Shall you accept Dr. Bryce's offer?"

"Well, it is a good offer, but I hardly want to settle down to practice—not yet, at anyrate. In any case I want to spend next winter at Vienna. I think, too, my real work lies in

research. You have managed my little money so well, uncle, that I shall have enough to live on.'

"But, Keith, you can't live on a hundred a year?"

"Is it as much as that? You have done well with it, uncle. But, as to living on it—many of our fellows live on less."

"No doubt. In their student-days and while they are making their way, perhaps, but not for a permanency. It is no income to marry on, for instance."

"It is not an income to marry on certainly," said Keith, smiling, "but then marriage does not enter into my plans. I have not the slightest intention of fettering myself in that way. I might as well give up research at once."

"That is all true enough. You cannot make an income and prosecute researches at the same time very well. But look here, Keith, do you mean to tell me that, among all the nice girls you know, you have not seen one you would like to settle down with? Only, I suppose, if you had, it would have been some girl without a fortune—like Violet Danby, for instance?" Mr. Keith was fishing for information. He had a

scheme of his own, and Miss Danby was just the sort of beautiful woman who is apt to interfere with the schemes of parents and guardians.

"Mrs. Crawfurd has been leading you astray, uncle," said Keith, laughing, "and to serve her own ends, you may be sure. I am only surprised that she did not tell you I had married Miss Danby!"

"Well—she didn't put it that way exactly"—Mr. Keith smiled grimly—"but she hinted that you knew a good deal about the late disappearance of that young lady."

"Oh? she put it that way, did she?" said Keith, who seemed greatly amused. "Talk about Christian charity after that!—what she says is true too—for once. That is the beauty of it, coming from a mother in Israel. But if I were to tell her what I know, I fancy she would be more astonished than gratified."

"She insisted too," Mr. Keith went on, "that after what has happened it was my duty to see that you married Miss Danby."

Keith's amusement increased.

"I suppose," he said, "you did not ask Mrs. Crawfurd to particularise 'what has happened'?"

"Well—no. You don't suppose there was any want of definiteness in the idea conveyed, do you?"

"Doesn't it strike you that this interest in Miss Danby is rather sudden?" Keith asked, looking very innocent. "I understood, you know, that it was on my account Mrs. Crawfurd sent her away."

"Doubtless," said Mr. Keith. "You see it comes after 'what has happened.' But the question is—are you prepared to marry the young lady?"

"Does Mrs. Crawfurd require an immediate answer?" was Keith's next impertinence.

"Well, no," said his uncle, "she did not state any definite time."

"There is a little difficulty, you see." Keith appeared to be considering the matter, but he looked mischievous. "and the difficulty is that, after 'what has happened,' I can't very well marry her."

"Mrs. Crawfurd would say that, after 'what has happened,' you can't very well avoid marrying her."

"Still, I am afraid the difficulty is insuperable," Keith went on. "In fact she wouldn't

have me. Just think of all the eligible young men who were ready to lay their saved souls and their fortunes at her feet. What chance had a poor worldling? Why even the new 'man of God' was in the swim. They have just imported a minor prophet, you know. He hadn't a fortune, but he had considerable expectations—hereafter. However, I clear the 'man of God,' and you can take your choice among the rest, as Violet did. You know young McSlimon, McSlobbery, and Co. as well as I do."

"Do you mean to say that Miss Danby has married a young man belonging to the chapel?"

"Exactly. Fancy Mrs. Crawfurd's delight when she finds that the lost sheep has married into the fold—though I can't say," Keith added meditatively, "that I ever heard *that* laid down as an orthodox mode of entrance."

Mr. Keith ignored the theological turn his nephew was giving to the conversation.

"I suppose you are not at liberty to tell me who it is?" he asked.

"No, uncle. I cannot say that I am," said Keith quite seriously, and the subject dropped. Presently Mr. Keith began again on his old tack.

"But about yourself, Keith? You haven't answered my question. Can't you find a nice girl to tempt you to settle down? Some of them have money too."

"There are nice girls enough, I daresay. But I have been so long away, that I don't know the state of the market. Besides, uncle, fortune-hunting is not in my line. If ever I do marry, I hope it will be for the woman's own sake, and not for what she has got. And meantime I am in love with my work."

"Well, at anyrate, your work can hardly lead you astray," said Mr. Keith. "But still—ah me! How we all want to act providence! I am getting up in years, Keith, and I would have liked to see both Elsie and you settled in life before I go. You see, my lad, a fortune, even such moderate riches as Elsie will have, is a sore peril for an unguarded girl, and I would have liked to have seen her in safe hands—the good lass." There was a pause, during which both smoked silently. And then the old man went on again. "I have sometimes hoped, do you know, that you and Elsie might have made a match of it."

This put Keith in a quandary. He knew his

love for his cousin had not been altogether cousinly. He knew, too, what his uncle had not suspected—that Elsie's heart was already won by a thoroughly good fellow—his cousin Tom—the Tom Challoner above mentioned. Nothing had been said between the two, and neither of them suspected Keith of knowing of their attachment, Keith was loyal above all things, and did not consider himself at liberty to impart his information without clear evidence of benefit to his unconscious clients. Still, something had to be said; so he said the first thing that occurred to him.

"I don't know that it would have been quite fair to have used my position in the house to engage my cousin's affections. She is very young yet; and, if I had done so, she might have regretted it afterwards."

"I should not have wished it if you had been a young man of that sort; and, as you say, Elsie is very young. Still, she is not too young to have an offer of marriage."

"Oh, indeed, who is it may I ask?"

"Well, it is not the offer I should have chosen myself. The young fellow is highly respectable. —well off too. He would be considered a catch

by a good many people. But somehow I don't like the idea."

"But you have not told me who it is," said Keith.

"It is Hugh Crawfurd."

"What! that fellow?"—said Keith, starting up and speaking with unusual warmth. "Has he actually had the insolence to propose for Elsie? You surely will not consent?"

"I don't intend to consent. I don't even like the idea of his being so far in Elsie's good graces as to have a right to make the proposal."

"He is not in Elsie's good graces at all," said Keith. "I know that, uncle, and, if I had been at home, he would have seen less of her than he has. But what I can't understand is how he comes to make the proposal at all. It is an insult."

"You can hardly call it an insult, I think," said Mr. Keith, "but, as a matter of detail, it was Mrs. Crawfurd who made me the proposal."

"Oh—that explains," said Keith. "Does Hugh know about it, do you think?"

"Surely. He is to come himself for the answer. But whatever you have against him, Keith, I think I ought to know it."

"Yes, but it would be just as well if you got your information from somebody else. I can tell you this much—I know enough to justify you in refusing to entertain the proposal."

"Well, I shall decline it at anyrate, but what about this matter—does Tom know?"

"Yes, but he will hardly tell you; but David Raeburn knows all about it, you had better apply to him. If he doesn't tell you, I will."

"Very well, but why shouldn't I get the information from Tom?"

Keith considered a few moments and then said:

"Will you keep a secret, uncle, if I tell it you?"

"Yes."

"You will take no action on the information?"

"No."

"Very well then. I very much fancy that Tom would like to ask you for Elsie, himself. Wait till he gets his partnership, and see."

Mr Keith was busy lighting a fresh cigar, and said nothing for a few minutes. Then in a lowered voice he asked:

"And Elsie—have you any notion of what she would say?"

"I think she would say 'Yes'—but I don't think she knows that much herself yet."

Another pause and then the old man spoke again:

"I would rather it had been yourself, my boy."

"Thank you, uncle, but Elsie can only make her own choice. I saw how it was as soon as I came home."

"Well, I will think it over. By-the-by, Crawfurd is to call for his answer to-night. Couldn't you take her out somewhere?"

"That is already arranged, as it happens, as Tom has booked places for us at the Royal."

"Well, that is settled. And now about yourself again. I don't want you to draw on your own money any sooner than you can help. It will be all the better for accumulating. I will put an extra hundred to your credit next week for laboratory expenses. You can call it the 'endowment of research,' if you like, but you must use it for other purposes if you have occasion. And you must let me know when you want more."

"Thank you, uncle," said Keith, "you are very good to me."

"I suppose you will want to be working out

those hints Professor Muhlenrad gave you about his discovery? "

"Yes, and I think the hints are going to work out to some purpose," and Keith reached out a pile of manuscript from a drawer and began to explain the hieroglyphs thereon. But his lecture was interrupted when Elsie came in from her walk.

A pretty, dainty little madam, not quite out of her teens. "Little," perhaps, is hardly the word for her. She was almost as tall as her father, and therefore quite as tall as most women. Her figure was graceful, and she dressed well and artistically. She had a pretty, bright face—which might have served for a feminine edition of Keith's—fine features, a delicate, sensitive mouth, sweet, well-set grey eyes, dimpled cheeks, and soft, bright brown hair, parted at one side, and carried smoothly away to a coil at the back of her shapely head. This pretty witch seated herself on the arm of her father's chair.

"My daddy," she said, "do you know what time it is? "

"Well, my dear, I think it is quite time you were getting dressed for dinner."

"That is exactly what I think," added Keith.

"Oh, you wicked people, and you are not dressed yourselves. You know you have been wasting your time, smoking and gossiping, and then you will blame me if we are late at dinner."

"Do you call this gossip, my dear?" said Mr. Keith, taking up the manuscripts.

"That is all very fine; but do you mean to tell me, my daddy"—here Elsie took her father's face in her hands—"that you could read a page of that to save your life? You are a miserable pretender, sir." This accusation was emphasised in a pleasant daughterly fashion, and then she turned to Keith who was looking on amused:

"Has your serene high mightiness got those tickets?"

"Here are the tickets, madam," said Keith.

"Very well, what time must I be ready?"

"Say a quarter to eight?" said Keith, looking inquiringly at his uncle, who nodded acquiescence. And Elsie went off, leaving a parting injunction.

"See you don't keep me waiting, good people."

"Shall we be off soon enough?" Keith asked his uncle, when Elsie had gone.

"Yes, I think so. Crawfurd can hardly come till after eight."

So after dinner Keith and his cousin went off together in a hansom, and were by no means surprised to find Mr. Tom Challoner waiting for them at the theatre-door.

CHAPTER II.

AULD LANG SYNE.

"Hopes die and their tombs are for token,
That the grief, as the joy of them, ends
Ere time, that breaks all things, has broken
The faith between friends."

A. C. Swinburne.

WHEN the young folks had departed, Mr. Keith also went out, and, on his return after a short absence, he gave orders that if Mr. Hugh Crawfurd called he was to be shown into the library. Then he went upstairs to Keith's room and smoked a meditative cigar. In course of time the expected visitor was announced, and Mr. Keith went down to receive him. Just as he got down to the hall, a second visitor was admitted—a tall, well-set-up, military-looking man, with grizzled hair and moustache, and a weather-beaten face lit up by merry blue eyes. He was unmistakably well dressed and had a quiet, unassuming manner, but for all that he looked a campaigner all over. As the stranger stepped into the lighted hall, Archibald Keith

looked at him intently for a moment, and then rapidly crossed the hall, holding out his hand.

"Lord bless me!" he exclaimed, "it is Harry Carmichael. Eh, man, but I am glad to see you."

"And how are you, old man?" said the other, as they shook hands, "you're a bit older since I saw you last."

"Ay, the years bring their changes, but it's something when they bring a meeting like this. But come upstairs, come upstairs. I have an appointment for a few minutes," Mr. Keith added in a lower tone, "an important one. But you can make yourself comfortable. This is my nephew Keith's room. You will find some good cigars in that box."

"All right, Archie, don't hurry for me, I have been in worse quarters."

"I shall only be a few minutes, and then we'll make a night of it," said Mr. Keith, as he went away.

The stranger settled himself in an easychair and lit a cigar. Then he began to look about him.

"Nephew Keith's room," he said to himself. "Why, that must be Helen's boy. Wonder

if the lad is like his mother!" Then he looked at the books in the case nearest him, running over their titles—"'Chemistry,' 'Physics,' 'Laboratory Practice,' 'Practice of Physic,' 'Forensic Medicine'—he must be a medicus—takes after his father, I suppose—good fellow Walter Dunbar was. I suppose he is dead, and Archie has taken up the boy. Perhaps Helen is here. Why does not Elspeth come to me? Queer—Archie never mentioned her too."

A maid appeared with a tray of decanters and their accompaniments. The stranger asked her if Mrs. Keith were in. The girl stared.

"There's nae Mistress Keith," she said. "Naebody but Miss Elsie. Mistress Dunbar was here when I came first, but she's dead—it'll be three years in syne. Shall I light the gas, sir?"

"No, thank you."

Meanwhile Mr. Keith was talking to Hugh Crawfurd in the library.

"I want you to understand, Hugh, that this matter must go no further. Elsie is very young and I don't care to have her engaged at all at present. And, besides, I have my own views with regard to her future. I may as well tell

you at once that your proposal gives me no reason for departing from those views."

"I am very sorry, sir," Crawfurd answered, "but may I ask if you have any reason against me personally? I can wait, if waiting would do."

"No, my young friend, waiting will not do. Have I not told you I have other views?"

"But, at least, may I not be allowed to ask Miss Keith herself?"

"Certainly not. Even if I had been inclined to accept your offer, I should not have allowed that at present. Really, Hugh," continued Mr. Keith, "you must take my answer." He laid his hand kindly on the young man's shoulder. "It is final. I had intended having some more talk with you, but I have an unexpected visitor. You can tell them at home that Harry Carmichael is in Glasgow. And now you must allow me to say good-night."

"But, Mr. Keith," persisted the young man, as they went out into the hall, "will you not tell me what has set you against me? Has Keith ——?"

Mr. Keith interrupted him.

"You may let Keith alone," he said. "When

your mother spoke to me last night, I held out no hopes to her. But I never thought but that you had a perfectly good right to propose for my daughter if you thought proper. Now you know yourself whether that is the case or not. Of course, I have made enquiries about you. I have no wish to blame you. I am sorry for you, and I cannot help thinking that your over-strict up-bringing has a great deal to answer for. Only—I cannot say I like your mode of reaction. Just think seriously, my boy, and see if you cannot pull yourself straight. Remember, a false position is a dangerous position. I think you should take your father into your confidence. At anyrate, remember, I am willing to help you. Meantime, I shall keep your secret. Now good-night."

They parted at the top of the outer steps, under the pillared porch, and then Mr. Keith hurried upstairs to his friend, and was soon settled in another easychair. The gas-lamps were lit, the grog was brewed, and they were comfortable.

"Here's tae us," said Mr. Keith, raising his glass, "man Hairry, but ye're the sicht for sair e'en It is almost worth while being parted to have such a meeting."

"Yes, I guess the meeting is pleasanter than the parting."

"Twenty-five years is a long time, Harry."

"It is, Archie—it takes a good slice out of a man's life."

"It does that, and it brings many changes."

"Changes? Yes. More changes than anything else. You seem to have changed your house for the better, for instance. You have not gone back in the world, anyhow."

"No. I cannot complain in that respect. For the house, it was Dunbar's. I bought it when he died."

"Yes, I remember Dunbar—a good fellow he was. You spoke of your nephew just now. I suppose that was his son? Is he like his father at all?"

"A good deal, But even more like his mother, I think.—But what about yourself? I seem to remember hearing that you were married?"

"Yes, I married a few years after I went out, but I lost my wife ten years ago. I have one daughter. I have brought her over with me to show her the old place."

"Ay? And how old is she? You must bring her here."

"How old? Let me see? Twenty—nearly twenty-one. I'll bring her—never fear. She must know all you old fogies already. She has heard of you often enough. She won't know the young ones, though."

"Well, you see," said Mr. Keith smiling, "you could hardly tell her about them. You went away before their time, and you didn't keep up much communication with us."

"Communication? Well, no I have been a darned sight too busy. I cut myself adrift, as I meant to. But I always meant to come back when I had made my pile. Well, I made it, and then I lost it at the war time—I served through most of the war time. I am Colonel Carmichael, an it please you. And then I made my pile again, and here I am."

"But suppose anything had happened to you in the war—what would have become of your daughter?"

"Oh, she had her mother, and if anything had happened to her, why then Polly was consigned to you."

"That was right," said Mr. Keith. "Is her name Mary, then?"

"No—Pauline. It was her mother's name—

she was a French woman. I call her Polly, because it's an English name, and near enough the French one for practical purposes."

Both smoked on silently for a while, and then Mr. Keith, leaning forward in his chair, said in a low voice :

"Did you hear of Elspeth's death ?"

Carmichael shook his head slowly :—

"I guessed it," he said, "when she did not come to me and you said nothing about her. How long ago ?"

"Seven years ago."

Then there was a long silence, after which they talked in low tones about the dead woman —sister to one and wife to the other, and a loving memory to both. Gradually, however, the talk came back to the living.

"Tom Challoner is still your partner, then ?" queried Carmichael.

"Yes, and as jolly and hearty as ever, and there is a young Tom growing up, as like his father as can be."

"Let me see. Who was it Challoner married ?"

He married Marion Dunbar—you remember her ? Walter's sister."

"Oh yes, I remember. And is young Tom in the business?"

"Yes, and doing well too. We are going to give him a partnership next year. But you don't ask after your old flame, Mary Huntly?"

"Mary Huntly—what about her then? Did she marry Crawfurd?"

"Yes. She married him, and they have flourished. They live in one of those fearfully respectable big houses in Blythswood Square. You never went in enough for the respectables to suit Mary."

"Come to that," said Carmichael, "you never were eaten up by respectability yourself. What family have they?"

"Let me see—there's James, who manages the New York branch of the business. Perhaps you know him?"

"No. I can't say that I do."

"Well, you'll see him I expect; he's over here just now, making love to Mary Challoner. He's a good fellow, is James. Then there is Hugh, and four younger ones."

"Does Crawfurd go in for little Zion as much as ever?"

"Oh dear me, yes. He is Bishop of Little

Zion. In fact down there everybody sings the tune Brother Crawfurd gives out."

"Do you ever go there?" Carmichael asked.

"I drop in sometimes with the Challoners for old sake's sake. I never did like Little Zion very much, but I got my good lass there, and she liked it to the end, and believed in it. There must be some good in a system that produces such women." Mr. Keith looked into Carmichael's face with a queer smile. "They were always talking about 'finding the Lord.' I was quite satisfied with finding my wife."

"The same old heathen as ever, Archie," said Carmichael, "you haven't changed much except in years. But I think I must look up the old shop to-morrow. Will you come?"

"Certainly. But look here. You are going to stay with me of course? Where shall I send for your luggage?"

"You forget there's Polly. We are staying at Burnbank."

"I'll tell you what, I will just send for your things at once, and Mademoiselle can come along with them.—But here come the youngsters."

"Are you all right, my daddy?" said Elsie, as she came in. "Have you been very dull?

How many cigars——?" and Mademoiselle broke off her saucy speech in some confusion as she noticed the stranger.

"That is the way I get talked to, Harry," said Mr. Keith. "What do you think of your niece? This is your Uncle Harry, my dear," he added to Elsie.

"My dear girl," said Uncle Harry, kissing her, "eh, but you are like your mother!"

"And now, Harry, let me introduce you to Mr. Tom Challoner, junior.—Mr. Carmichael, Tom, is an old friend of your father's."

"I have heard of you, sir," said Tom. "Father will be very glad to see you."

Tom Challoner's father was a Yorkshireman, and Tom himself looked a "tyke" every inch. Tall, broad-shouldered, almost burly, he had a shrewd, merry, honest face, handsome enough in its way—though his features were not refined, like Keith's—close-cropped light hair, with the first down of the coming whiskers and moustache to match, and clear, bright, grey eyes.

"But what has become of Keith?" was the next enquiry.

"Oh, Keith stopped to speak to somebody in

Buchanan Street," said Elsie. "He will be here soon."

Just then supper was announced, and they all went down to the dining-room, where, of course, Uncle Harry had to give an account of himself all over again, and Tom had to give all sorts of information about his father and mother. Then Tom and Elsie were very anxious to know about the new cousin. Mr. Carmichael told them as well as he could.

"For one thing, Archie," he said in conclusion, "she will be at home among all these pictures of yours. I have had her properly educated as an artist. She could actually earn money by painting."

"I am exceedingly glad to hear it," said Mr. Keith. Then he turned to his daughter.

"What do you think of that, Miss Idleness?"

"I think it is very nice of her," said Elsie, "but I couldn't do any thing of the sort. I am not clever, am I, Tom?"

"Your ladyship is quite clever enough to get your own way as a rule," said Tom. "What do you say, uncle?"

"Quite, Tom!" said Mr. Keith, laughing.

"But you haven't told us what Pauline looks like, Uncle Harry," Elsie insisted.

"I will show you," said he, "I have her photograph in my overcoat-pocket." He rose to go and get the photograph, but as he opened the dining-room door he stopped short with an exclamation of astonishment. Tom Challoner, who had also risen, stood behind Mr. Carmichael with a smile of intense amusement on his face.

"Well, I'll be ——"

But the remainder of Uncle Harry's speech was suppressed.

CHAPTER III.

COINCIDENCES.

"Par divers moyens on arrive à pareille fin."
Montaigne.

KEITH'S business with his acquaintance did not seem very important, and he soon resumed his walk up the street. It would not be an altogether uncharitable explanation of this to suppose that Keith had simply made his friend's appearance an excuse for dropping behind, in order to let Tom and Elsie go home by themselves. All true lovers, at least, will be able to appreciate this performance of Keith's in his character of judicious friend. It has been remarked that "virtue is its own reward," and that, as a rule, it gets no other. It is, however, the exception that proves the rule, and on this occasion it fell to Keith's lot to be the exception. His virtue was rewarded. Just as he got to the corner of St. Vincent Street, he was accosted by a little girl who was selling newspapers.

"Will ye have a paper, sir?" she said.

Keith stopped and looked down on the little creature, and so, for the first time, came under the observation of a young lady who afterwards became very important to him. This young lady was in an omnibus which had just stopped at the corner. She was sitting near the door, and noticed Keith as he stood on the side-walk in the lamplight, smiling pleasantly down on the little news-seller—a tall, well-made young fellow, in evening dress, with a pleasant face, frank and clever-looking. The girl was evidently an acquaintance. The young lady heard him ask her why she had not gone home to bed, and when the child objected that she had her papers to sell, he bought the lot for a lump-sum—probably in excess of their value—and sent her off happy, with an ironical admonition that late hours were not good for young ladies. Then, unaware that he had been observed, he got into the 'bus, just as it was moving off, and sat down opposite his observer.

It was not long before Keith's attention was attracted to his *vis-à-vis*, and certainly she was worth looking at. Of course he did not stare at her, but no great amount of observation was required to see that she was wonderfully sweet

and pretty, and that she was perfectly dressed. Keith first saw the sweetness of her face and then its beauty, and then was struck—being an observant young man—by the style of her dress, which, however, had nothing unusual about it but its quiet perfection and daintiness.

"What a pretty Quakeress she would make!" said Keith to himself. "But still she looks too roguish for that—she should be a Huguenot. She is not a Glasgow girl, at anyrate. She isn't French, though her bonnet is, I fancy; and she is hardly English. There's a lot in her, though; and she is good as gold."

Then Keith turned his attention to the other passengers, but did not find them so interesting.

The young lady, on the other hand, was not unobservant. She has been attracted by Keith's pleasant ways with the little news-seller, and now found his face equally attractive in its gravity:—A somewhat square face, with a look of energy and power—large grey eyes that seemed as if they could be dreamy, or at least meditative at times; well-formed nose, and enough of it; good mouth; and square chin, which the usual adornments of youthful manhood had not as yet altogether obscured; fair hair cropped pretty

closely. That was the face as she saw it. He was well got up, too, but not quite to the extent of dandyism: he looked, in fact, like a man who has many things to think of more important than dress. Mademoiselle, too, made her comments.

"Looks a smart man—guess he likes his own way—and takes it. Looks as if he could be trusted, anyhow." From which it would appear that Keith's doubt about her nationality had not been unreasonable.

The omnibus was bound for "the Crescents," but, before it had reached that enchanted region of successful respectability, a heavy rain had commenced to fall, and Keith noticed with concern that the pretty Huguenot was but indifferently provided against such a change of weather.

"It is to be hoped she has not far to go in this rain," was his mental comment on this state of affairs, "or she will be ill to a certainty."

The rain was still falling when the 'bus stopped at the corner of St. George's Road, and the young lady prepared to leave it. Keith got out, and, after assisting an elderly lady to alight, escorting her to the side-walk and putting up her umbrella for her, had turned to see how

Mademoiselle had fared, when she came up to Keith's companion, but the old lady did not know the address to which the young one wished to be directed.

"I dinna ken, my dear," she said. "But may be this young gentleman can tell ye."

And with this very informal introduction this benevolent old party left the young people together.

"You have got out at the wrong end of the street," said Keith, "you should have gone on half a mile or so further."

"Ah, no wonder I could not recognise the place. I thought it was the corner where I got into the car at first," said Mademoiselle.

"I am going partly your way," said Keith. "I think you had better let me escort you, on the strength of the old lady's—shall we say 'provisional'?—introduction. It is not very far, but it is quite far enough for you to get thoroughly wet in this rain. I can at least shelter you somewhat, unless, indeed, you would prefer to take the umbrella and go on by yourself?"

"Oh no. Thank you. I could not think of depriving you of it. But indeed I shall be

glad to accept your offer, as I am quite a stranger in Glasgow, and I don't know whether I could find my way after all. Yes, I think the old lady's introduction will allow so much. And perhaps my papa will be in when we get to the hotel, and then we can put ourselves *en règle*. But indeed I do not like to take you out of your way."

"Oh, it is all right for that," was Keith's reply. Then he looked at his watch and laughed. "I rather fancy I am not wanted just yet."

"Indeed," she said, "that can hardly be pleasant, but I thank you for your kindness all the same."

"Then you must allow me to exercise my privilege," said Keith, "Do you know it is almost dangerous for you to be out to-night without being wrapped up? Permit me"—and Keith took from a pocket in his overcoat a large silk muffler, which he proceeded to wrap round her throat.

All this time they had been standing by a lamppost, and, as he rapidly adjusted the handkerchief, Keith found himself looking down upon the loveliest face he had ever seen. It

was an oval face, with very delicate coutours, and a delicate, clear complexion; large, soft, clear brown eyes, with a somewhat wistful expression; features finely modelled, and especially a tenderly-curved, sensitive mouth; fine soft brown hair cunningly setting off the oval of the face. That was what Keith saw. A face full of sweetness and tenderness and goodness, and yet in its way a strong and resolute face withal.

"Thank you," she said, and it seemed to Keith that her voice corresponded to her face—musical, clear, and soft, with a certain precise delicacy of intonation that gave it individuality. For the rest she was fairly tall, and her figure was buoyant and graceful.

Nothing but commonplace had passed between the two as they stood for that minute under the lamplight in the rain. And yet years of ceremonious intercourse could not have left such a feeling of trust and mutual regard—not love at all—at that sudden meeting, face to face as it were, out of infinite space. When they walked on they were friends.

"You have not been long in Glasgow, I suppose?" said Keith.

"No, we only arrived this morning, and I don't know what my papa will think if he comes back to the hotel before me."

"You don't often go out by yourself, then?"

"Well, not often, so late as this. But I wanted to go and see an old place down town that I have often heard my papa speak about; —he is Scotch, I should tell you;—and so, as he was going to be out late and I was tired of being by myself, I thought I would go and see the old chapel. The hotel-people told me what cars to take, and I thought I had got on very well, till I left the car and found I did not know which way to go."

"Yes, I thought you had lost your way," said Keith.

"That was the worst of it, and there was no policeman to be seen. I believe it is considered very shocking here to ask your way of anyone except a policeman. The old lady was a great relief."

"She was indeed," said Keith. "I am greatly obliged to her myself. Do you know?" he went on, "I am no great believer in Mrs. Grundy, and I am inclined to think that this mode of

making acquaintance is an improvement on the formal introduction one gets in society."

"Indeed? No doubt you have other acquaintances made in the same way?"

"No," said Keith, "I don't know that I have."

"Are you quite sure," she said, laughingly, "that you have not been talking already to-night to someone to whom you have not been introduced? A young lady too!"

"No, I don't think so," Keith answered meditatively. "I met a fellow I knew in Buchanan Street, and I bought a paper just before I got into the omnibus."

"Is it usual," she asked demurely, "for young gentlemen in Glasgow to buy a dozen copies of the same paper?"

"I don't know that it is," said Keith, laughing in return. "But it was quite time the little lass was in bed."

"Quite time. Still, I suppose it remains true that you have not been introduced to the young lady? I suppose I shall be told next that I am out too late. When one is honoured with a gentleman's acquaintance without an introduction, one must expect to be told that one is out too late. Is that so?"

"Not exactly, I think," said Keith. "I have hardly the superiority of age and experience that would authorise me to advise your ladyship. And, besides, if I may be permitted to say so, I think your ladyship will probably be always the best judge of what you should do."

"Now, that is very complimentary. You must be a very delightful acquaintance, sir, if you believe in your lady friends to that extent.—And experience—dear me! I might set up for an old maid after that. I will change my name and call myself 'Patience.'—Miss Patience!—what a treasure of a name for an old maid!"

"The young ladies of my acquaintance," said Keith drily, "are more given to changing their surnames."

"Ah, that would be worse than ever. Nearly all the girls I know in New York have lovers, and there is always something wrong about them. Sometimes they are poor, and that displeases the parents. Sometimes they are rich, and the girls really only wanted their money. Sometimes they are faithless, and sometimes quarrelsome; and, when they are married, the lovers do not always care for each other, and they hardly ever seem really happy. No, I think

friends are better than lovers; and, anyhow, none of these lovers were as nice as my papa."

They had been walking up the Crescent, and by this time were passing Mr. Keith's house. The rain was coming down faster than ever.

"I think you ought to have a cloak," said Keith to his companion. "If you will allow me, I will get you one of my cousin's. But stay—you had better come up the steps and under the porch." Then he let himself in at the inner glazed door with his latch-key, and Mademoiselle found herself on the threshold of what seemed a small picture-gallery. Attracted by the pictures, she asked Keith if she might look at them, and while he went for the cloak she made her round of inspection. She was standing in rapt contemplation of "A Sunset over Loch Dhuil," when she heard a door open behind her, and, turning quickly, found herself face to face with her father.

"Papa!"

"Pauline!"

"Oh, papa, however did you come here?"

Before Mr. Carmichael could answer, Tom Challoner came forward.

"Allow me, Mr. Carmichael," he said, "to present to you my cousin, Dr. Keith Dunbar."

Carmichael took one rapid look at the young man's face, and then, wringing his hand warmly, he said:

"I don't understand the situation exactly, but I suppose you have been befriending this girl of mine, and I thank you heartily."

By this time Mr. Keith and Elsie had come into the hall. Pauline was presented in due form. Her uncle and cousin fell in love with her at once —and completely. They then went back into the dining-room, and Pauline and Keith had to have some supper. There was a good deal of laughing about "Uncle Harry's photograph," and Tom Challoner was hardly the sort of young man to forego such an opportunity of roasting his irreproachable cousin.

"Nice sort of beggar you are, Keith," he said *sotto voce*, "inveigling innocent young ladies into strange houses in this fashion," and then aloud:—"You don't know, cousin Pauline, what an escape you have had!"

"What have I escaped?" she asked.

"Well, you see, Keith wants to try the effect of his last new poison on somebody. I have

offered myself for the experiment, but, curiously enough, poisons do not affect me. Now you have just the sort of constitution that would show—"

"I have often remarked," interpolated Keith, apparently addressing an impartial universe, "that it is a pity Tom does not turn his attention to the higher walks of fiction. Such exuberance of imagination, to say nothing of the massiveness of his inventions, is thrown away in private conversation."

Mr. Carmichael looked mischievous.

"I am not surprised, sir," he said, addressing Tom, "that poisons have no effect on your constitution. You will hardly remember the coral you cut your teeth on, as a baby; but it was one I sent your mother. I got it from an Iroquois squaw. It was medicated with various poisons. You were thus inoculated against the effects of poison in after-life. I have no doubt you were fractious at the time, but still you have been incalculably benefited. I had a similar coral for Pauline; so Dr. Keith's experiment would probably have failed."

"I suppose, Miss Pauline," said Keith, "you have not brought your coral over with you? I should like to borrow it."

"I am sorry I have not brought it," said Pauline. "You see, I gave over using it some years ago. But surely," she added, with calm, imperturbable innocence, "you are not so very much younger than you look."

"You wouldn't think it, cousin," said Tom, "but Keith is actually younger than I am."

"No wonder he wants a coral, then," retorted Elsie, with a mischievous glance at Tom that emphasised her insinuation charmingly.

"You see," said Keith, confidentially to Pauline, "Tom's moral nature has been deteriorated by this immunity from ills which other men are heir to. And I thought that perhaps a course of your coral, further medicated by myself, might counteract this. It is such a pity! Who would believe that he had no sense of truth, or honour, or propriety—or even tune! Why, it was only last Sunday that his mother asked him to play the hundredth psalm, and he ground out the 'Ratcatcher's Daughter.'"

"Dear me," said Pauline, "how very sad! And what did Mrs. Challoner say?"

"Oh," returned Keith, "she did not exactly recognise the air, but she thought the difference

was due to Tom's splendid playing. And Mrs. Crawfurd, who was present, thought it was rather livelier than she was accustomed to. But still, she could make the words fit, and so supposed it was all right. Only she never knew before that the hundredth psalm had a chorus. It hasn't, you know, in the ordinary versions."

Here Mr. Carmichael interfered, and said they must be going or they would find themselves locked out.

"Oh, uncle," said Elsie, "are you going to take Pauline away from us already?"

"Couldn't you both stay to-night, Harry, at all events?" said Mr. Keith. And finally that arrangement was agreed to.

Then, after a while, Tom took his departure, and the girls went off to their rooms, in one or other of which, be sure, they had a feminine confab before they went to bed. Keith and the uncles adjourned to the snuggery and talked well into the morning, and when the elders retired Keith sat on there by himself. Mechanically he took up the review he had been reading in the afternoon. It was his habit to "read something like a Christian" before he turned in. But he could not read. He could only think of the bonny,

bonny face he had looked into in the lamplight; of the girl's bright, happy talk; and of the strange chance that had brought them together. He got out his manuscripts, but even his pet theory could not command his attention. His own hieroglyphics—the formulæ for the carbon compounds, with their incessantly-recurring C and H —were in league against him and persisted in suggesting her name, till Pauline secured as good a name for an organic base as rosaniline itself. At last the broadening day awoke him from his reveries, and he went off to his bedroom like a sleep-walker.

Oh wise physician! There is a heart complaint not mentioned in your books, not treated in your hospitals, and forgotten in your clinical lectures. Your skill avails not.

CHAPTER IV.

HUGH CRAWFURD.

"But a crime will do
As well, I repeat, to serve as a test
As a virtue golden thro' and thro'."

R. Browning.

IT is not generally known that the daughter of Zion—of Little Zion, perhaps we should say—is a sufficiently romantic individual—no less so, indeed, than her sisters of Philistia and the regions beyond. Her ideal hero, however, differs—perhaps only in externals—from the engaging young gentlemen who act in that capacity to these less well-regulated daughters of Eve. Romance is a sealed book to her; or, at least, a forbidden one. And of men and women she knows only the artificial growths of the temple enclosure, the resources of which may be paralleled by the botanical range of a kitchen garden. Of course her ideal has to be evolved from the life she knows, and the "soldier" of the cross, that is the man of God, becomes her hero, Francis Xavier, the missionary, the preacher,

and, in default of these, the young man who expounds.

Yet the woman-heart works in much the same way whether it beats against the bars of a French corset or under the Quaker kerchief, and ever demands in its hero some virile distinction. But the ability to

> "Clear the points o' faith
> wi' rattlin' an' wi' thumping,"

or without, by no means implies the possession either of mental ability or of good looks. Beauty, such as young people can recognise, is hardly the function of the common objects of the pulpit. In fact the conjunction of intellect and manhood with piety of the conventicle type is not an occurrence whose frequency excites remark.

But to the maidenhood of Little Zion it appeared that these blessings had been bestowed in full measure on Hugh Crawfurd. Young, handsome, clever, wealthy, he was quoted by aged Christians as a shining example of early piety and abounding gifts of grace. Certainly his life was exemplary; his profession had the merit of such sincerity as he had in him—the negative sincerity of knowing nothing to the contrary; his opinions were eminently orthodox, and his expositions thereof in the various ancillary means

of grace—he was not a preacher, his father opposed that—were as dogmatic as the most assured believer could desire. Indeed, he spoke the spiritual vernacular—the *argôt*, so to speak—of the conventicle, with artistic appreciation of its niceties of expression that was very delightful. He was an adept at that style of theological discussion which consists in overloading your case with *ad captandum* statements—"playing to the gallery," an actor would call it—and calling your opponent an infidel when he questions their relevance to the argument. Thus certain young men, his contemporaries of the chapel Mutual Admiration Society, used to say roundly that Hugh was an ass—that he could not argue, and that he was as ignorant as a Hottentot, even of theology, the amateur theology of such societies. It is grievous to have to relate that these young men used to lead Hugh into argumentative pitfalls, from which his most asseverating orthodoxy could not save him. Hugh, however, had the audience on his side, and took little damage in these logical martyrdoms; for these young men were strongly suspected of heterodoxy, or even of having no "doxy" at all—a most parlous state of things. Cleverness and scholarship evidently

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had a tendency to set a young man to doubting the tradition of the elders, and were not altogether compatible with the grace of God in he heart. The young women, however, made no such mistake ; they liked Hugh very well. He was a very delightful, or a very edifying, companion, according to the circumstances of the occasion, and would suavely banter a mother in Israel or flirt with her daughter with equal facility. Flirt ? Flirt in Little Zion ! Why not ? Is a woman any less a woman because you and she are looking over the same hymn-book instead of reading Swinburne together ? Humanity varies its dissipations, but not its nature. Put a lot of young men and young women in the bottomless pit, and they will flirt —as soon as they get acclimatised.

To come back to Hugh Crawfurd, he was simply a well-meaning young fellow enough, very ignorant, very narrow. Of scholarship he knew nothing, of culture he knew nothing, of anything outside of business and Little Zion he knew nothing. Had he been brought up in the Brazen Tower of the fable, he could hardly have been more isolated from the many-pulsing life of the world—so much of it at least as throbbed beyond

the swirl of the little back-eddy of which he formed a part. But—or perhaps Hugh had better make his appearance.

He was not very tall—say about five feet eight or nine; he had a very good figure, somewhat slight, but still well-built and graceful, with broad, flat shoulders and small hands and feet; his complexion had an interesting pallor; his forehead, though not high, showed square and white beneath his dark hair; his eyes were good, and set off by dark level eyebrows; his nose was straight, and a heavy moustache hid the weakness of his mouth and the sensuousness of the lower part of his face. To an observer of character, too, the back of his head had its significance; it formed such a straight line with his neck. This gave one a strong impression of brute force, which, taken in connection with the contrasting intelligence and sensuousness of his face, gave the data for an interesting psychological problem, even apart from the complications superinduced by the emotional influences of Little Zion. Thinking of Hugh as he was at this time, one thinks of the house that was "swept and garnished"—waiting, for what?

It is a question if Hugh Crawfurd ever had a fair chance in life. Mr. Keith's opinion that his strict "upbringing" had a great deal to answer for, was, at least, the opinion of a thoughtful and observant man acquainted with all the circumstances of the case. A strong animalism is the best reinforcement of a fine intellect, but it must have its own legitimate sphere of activity. In Hugh's case this had been denied. He had never been allowed to indulge in the athletic sports of other young men. Such amusements were considered frivolous in themselves, and dangerous as leading to the companionship of worldlings. Just as though any company almost would not have been better for this boy than his own, or than the essentially feminine—not to say effeminate — society to which he was practically restricted. The atmosphere of an emotionally religious community tends naturally to become charged with the conditions of spiritual hysteria. And these conditions reacting upon weak natures whose animalism is strong occasionally produces some very ugly results indeed. Hugh had the makings of a fine man in him. But he was weak, though it must be confessed his weakness was rather an

acquired defect of moral habit than any original defect of moral nature. He had, too, that facile plasticity of adaptation to surrounding circumstances which passes with so many people for good nature, and with this an intense egotism. Altogether it is to be feared that Hugh's moral nature had not been suited in the matter of environment. And yet in this respect he would have said of himself in all sincerity:—"All these things have I kept from my youth up."

When Hugh Crawfurd left Mr. Keith, he walked thoughtfully away down the Crescent. Then he came to a pause, and stood as if undecided which way to go. Looking at his watch, he found it was only half-past eight. "I may as well go," he said, "even if it is only for an hour or so." And he retraced his steps up the Crescent, turning the corner by Mr. Keith's house, and making his way down the hill at the back to St. George's Road. Then up West Graham Street he came to the district of the New City Road. Here, in a quiet cross street, he stopped again irresolute; then went on again into another quiet street. He entered a narrow passage leading to the stone staircase which communicated with all the floors in the block,

and, ascending to the top landing, let himself in at one of its doors with a latch-key. Locking the door behind him, Hugh found himself in a little dark lobby; but a door beyond opened, showing a bright little kitchen as a background to the figure of a girl who stood in the doorway for an instant, and then sprang forward and embraced him lovingly.

"Oh Hugh, my darling!" she said, "I have wanted you so."

Hugh kissed her, tenderly enough, and led her back into the little bright kitchen. Then she had to help him off with his light overcoat, and it appeared that this operation could not be satisfactorily effected without the accompaniment of more kisses. Then she stepped back to admire him, and certainly the young fellow looked handsome enough in his faultless evening dress; and his companion was buxom and bonnie as need be wished.

She was of medium height, and had a good, full figure. Her face was not at all of a common type. Her fine wavy hair was not fair, and could not be called dark—ash-colour or mouse-colour would nearly describe the tint, but these epithets give no hint of the misty lights and shadows that

lurked in its misty meshes and gave it its beauty. Misty light grey eyes set beneath level eyebrows, a low broad forehead, a short straight nose, dimpled chin and cheeks, and a delicate peach-bloom complexion, made up a tender, dreamy, misty face—the face of a loving and true woman.

> "My Faith hath misty hair, and eyes
> You cannot tell their changing hue."

Some such face must have suggested those lines; albeit, it was a short-sighted face, in more senses than one.

"You ought to have a flower in your coat, sir," she said, "when you come to see your wife." She was still admiring him from a little distance. "But I suppose you have been to a party and have given it to some fine lady."

"No, I have been to no party," said Hugh; "precious little of that sort of thing comes my way. A Dorcas-meeting or a tea-fight would be a more likely performance, but they are not for Saturday night. I believe I am supposed to be gone to a prayer-meeting, only I didn't go."

"Ah well! he's a good boy for coming to see his poor wife, and she has got something for him. Take off your coat, dear." She went into another room and came back carrying a hand-

some flowered dressing-gown, into which Hugh was inducted with more kisses. Indeed, this young person seemed to think that everything she did for Hugh required this sacramental osculation. Certainly, as the "outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace" on her part, the kissing seemed to come within the definition of a sacrament.

"Now he shall have a smoke, the good boy," she said, when she had got Hugh comfortably seated in a low easychair by the fire. She made a curious pretence of selecting a cigar with the most critical judgment. Then she kissed it, and bit off the end with her pretty white teeth, making a little *moue* of disgust as she tasted the tobacco. She got the matches and seated herself on his knee. Whereupon she, of course, kissed him again. After that she gave him the cigar and lighted it for him. These formalities completed, she laid herself back in his arms, with her pretty head resting on his shoulder, his disengaged hand held caressingly in both of hers, and her shapely feet lodged on the fender, in her bright slippers and dark stockings, while a little glimpse of white petticoat just showed below her grey dress.

"You're a good girl, Violet," said Hugh, as she settled herself.

"I'm your wife, dear, I ought to be good to you," was the tender response. "Isn't this nice, dear?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "it's very nice. I wish I had not to go away again."

"Aren't you going to stay to night, then, dearest?"

"No, I must show up at home."

"At home indeed! Isn't this your home, sir?"

"Yes, darling, but you know what I mean," said Hugh. "Perhaps I may get over to-morrow for tea, and again later. If we have supper decently early, prayers will be over at ten, and the doors locked by half-past. And I may be able to get here by eleven or soon after."

"Very well, I'll have such a nice little supper for you. And you'll have some supper with me to-night before you go, won't you dearest?"

"Yes, darling," said Hugh, who was always really and truly in love with this girl while he was with her. But when he was away from her he was apt to be mostly in love with himself and his own convenience.

"How is your mother, Hugh?" she asked.

"Much as usual," he said.

"She was very hard to me," Violet went on. "I might have been starved to death by this time, but for you, my darling. It was cruel of her to send me away as she did, and to take away my character and my whole chance of getting another situation. It was very cruel. I had done no wrong."

"No, dear, you had done no wrong."

"No, I had done no wrong. I had not even encouraged you, although I loved you so much, had I dear?"

"No, that you hadn't," said Hugh.

"And as for Dr. Dunbar," she went on, "I am sure he hardly spoke to me at all."

"Quite true, darling."

"And how was I to go to the dear folks at home disgraced? It would have killed my father. And I would have almost died first."

"Indeed, I think you would," said Hugh.

"But you were so good to me. Oh, my love, my love, what have I done that you should be so good to me?"

So they sat by the fire and talked, and Hugh gave himself up to the enjoyment of it, as he

did to whatever pleasure came in his way, and the girl lavished her beautiful words of tender love upon him to her heart's content. And by-and-by she got up and set before him a dainty little supper, waiting upon him with a liberal bestowal of the sacramental ministration above mentioned.

"Do you know, dearest," she said, during a pause in the proceedings, "when you tell people about our marriage, I don't want to live in a great stupid house like that one in Blythswood Square. I want us to have just a nice little cottage for our two selves. We could afford a nice little cottage in the country, like my dear Yorkshire home. Couldn't we, dearest?"

"Perhaps we will, dear," and for the moment, at anyrate, Hugh honestly meant to get quit of his coils and live a true life with Violet, and he thought of Mr. Keith's offer of help.

"And at anyrate, dear," said Violet, "couldn't we run over to Scarsdale some of these days when you have a holiday? We could stay with my mother, and I do so want to show you to my mother, Hugh."

"Well perhaps we might manage that, though I don't see much chance of my getting away for

some time, and especially of getting away by myself."

This chance did not seem so impossible in the presence of this eager advocate, and yet it somehow dashed his good resolutions: it might involve more inquiry into his conduct than he cared to court.

"You know, dearest," said Violet, "I have told them about our marriage having to be kept secret, and you need not be afraid of them bothering you about that. It is enough for them to know that I am married."

"Well, my dear, we'll do it if it is possible, and if I can't get off you shall go yourself for a while. You ought to have the chance of showing them your wedding-ring, certainly." And for the time Hugh meant what he said.

"Have you seen Mr. Keith yet?" Violet asked, later in the evening.

"Yes. That's settled," said Hugh. "For one thing, it will keep my mother quiet for a time. I don't see where she can raise another scheme of the sort in a hurry."

"Your mother will find a scheme of some sort, Hugh, you may depend upon that. She will give you no peace, my poor boy, till you stop her

matchmaking by telling her about me. However, as you say, she can't get up another marriage for you just yet. It was fortunate she chose Elsie this time."

"It was," said Hugh, as though his refusal had been a foregone conclusion.

About ten o'clock Hugh was away, and, this time, a short walk over Garnet Hill took him to Blythswood Square. He was just in time to officiate at family "worship" in his father's absence, and then, complaining of a headache, he went up to his own room without waiting for supper. Presently his mother knocked at his door. She had brought him some supper and wanted to see him eat it.

"What did Mr. Keith say?" she asked.

"Said it was no good," was the answer. "He had already decided about Elsie. Would not even let me speak to her."

"Was he displeased with you, or what?"

"No, he was very good," said Hugh, remembering Mr. Keith's kind words. "But he means no."

"Where's your courage, man?" said Mrs. Crawfurd. "Are you going to be beaten by a simple refusal? If you had been half a man you

would have got the girl on your side first. Archibald Keith would give that girl his head if she asked him for it. It is my opinion you're still hankering after that minx Violet Danby."

"All very fine, mother." Hugh was anxious to create a diversion. "Tackle Mr. Keith yourself, if you like. And as for Elsie—what chance have I with Tom Challoner or Keith Dunbar. I believe she would rather take up with Max Ruthven, who is as poor as a rat, or even with David Raeburn and his hunchback, than with me."

"I'll give Archie Keith a piece of my mind when I see him," said Mrs. Crawfurd.

"You will make very little by that, mother," said Hugh. "I have heard you say that nothing will turn Mr. Keith, if he once takes a thing in his head. Now, whatever his plan is, he means it."

"I can't see why my son should not be good enough for Archie Keith's daughter."

"I suppose it's a free country," retorted Hugh, "and the man can choose as he likes for his daughter. By-the-by, he told me to say that Harry Carmichael is in Glasgow. Who is Harry Carmichael?"

"Harry Carmichael!" said Mrs. Crawfurd in astonishment. "Depend upon it, then, Harry has a son, and Archie Keith means his daughter for him."

"Then there'll be a row with Keith or Tom Challoner, it strikes me," was Hugh's comment on this view of the situation.

But Mrs. Crawfurd had retired precipitately, not wishing to have to answer questions about "Harry Carmichael." Hugh locked his door and sat down to think. He would have liked to smoke, but that would not do in this saintly establishment.

"Wouldn't it be better," he thought, "to acknowledge his marriage, and give up this wearisome double life? There would be a row with his mother certainly, but she would still do her duty even to Violet as her daughter-in-law. But then the exposure! His mother would keep no secrets, that was very certain. What would be said to such a marriage? Was the marriage all right? Would they want to look into details —the certificates for instance; or would they want to marry him over again? Ah, the exposure!—what would the chapel people say? Ah well, there was no need to do anything

definite for the present. Mr. Keith's refusal would keep his mother quiet for some little time, and who knows what might turn up meanwhile? Perhaps it would be as well if Violet and he did pay that visit to Yorkshire, acknowledgment would be easier from a distance. It would save a good deal of inconvenient questioning. After all, there was nothing to hurry about."

This was the line of meditation to which Hugh gave himself up.—No thought of Violet's unselfish, generous love, or of the false position he was creating for her in keeping the marriage concealed. All his thought was for himself and his precious reputation. God help poor Violet!

CHAPTER V.

A DORCAS MEETING.

"Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall."
Measure for Measure.

LITTLE Zion had its dissipations. That is only to say that it was a society of men and women, and followed out on its own lines the gregarious instincts of humanity. Its members as a rule did not recognise the social obligations of life to any great extent, but then their neighbours of the same social stratum who were not in the fold did not recognise them either. Little Zion, however, had the advantage of being a companionship, and forms of social life grew up in it as ancillary means of grace. For the most part these were public or semi-public. But the cravings of human nature — especially of feminine human nature — are strong. These meetings supplied no opportunity for the feminine function of gossip. The men met each other, and met other men out in the world of work and business. They were sufficiently provided with

opportunities of social intercourse. But the women—well the women folk established the Dorcas meeting. At stated intervals they met at various houses to spend long afternoons over needlework which they could have done better at home, to drink tea together, and to talk, talk, talk. To tell the truth, the talk ran a good deal to scandal. They were good souls for the most part, kindly and true-hearted in all the relations of life, and yet given two or three gathered together, there was scandal in the midst of them. Well, perhaps the institution of social cannibalism is met with outside of Little Zion. But to proceed. In the evening, husbands, fathers, and brothers put in an appearance, and the affair ended as something very like an informal evening party. Sweethearts—as sweethearts—were not *en règle*. But they came nevertheless. The sweetheart came for

"His sisters and his cousins and his aunts,"

although cousinhood was considered an unsatisfactory relationship, and by some of the stricter matrons was relegated to the list of prohibited degrees. The advent of the gentlemen rather interfered with the work, but, as the work did not

amount to much at the best, that did not matter. The real value of the work lay in its "induced" sociableness, which without it would have been impossible. Rich and poor met on a common footing, and that was an unmixed good. True the ostensible object of the meeting was a transparent fiction, but the good folks never saw through it, their hypocrisy was so deliciously innocent and unconscious. They thought they were denying themselves for the good of others—they were really obeying an instinct of the human nature they condemned.

Mrs. Crawfurd took advantage of a sewing meeting, held at her house, to introduce Mr. Carmichael to the world of Little Zion, to which he had so long been a stranger. Pauline and Elsie were invited. They were to attend at three o'clock in the afternoon; their fathers were to look in in the evening. Keith was not invited. There was little love lost between that young man and Mrs. Crawfurd.

Accordingly, on the afternoon appointed, the girls found themselves in Mrs. Crawfurd's drawing-room in the midst of a chattering company of all-sorts and conditions of women. Each lady was provided with work. "Work" is not an expres-

sion that rises to the height of the occasion, but the masculine mind is inadequate to the detail of such matters; still, the masculine mind could not have helped noticing that all the various employments had one characteristic in common—they appeared to stimulate conversation, much after the fashion—to compare great things with small—of the glasses of grog and the pipes in a bar-parlour or coffee-room snuggery; at least, whatever the employment allotted to any given lady, it made so little demand on her attention that she was quite at liberty to contribute her quota to the general babel.

Elsie had managed to get herself and Pauline into a comparatively quiet corner with some of her girl friends, for Mrs. Crawfurd had not confined the gathering to the members of the society. The hostess was busy with some other ladies, matrons like herself of approved capacity, distributing work to the rest, so that it was some time before she was at leisure to present Pauline to the two or three ancient dames who had been her father's contemporaries. This presentation was somewhat of an ordeal to the girl. Some of these excellent ladies were inclined to look askance at their old friend's

daughter. Her dress offended them in spite of its extreme quietness and simplicity. Such a fashionably-dressed young person could scarcely be a child of God. Then Pauline was beautiful, and vital to the finger-tips. These were even worse offences than the dainty dressing. To these good people a beautiful woman was a sinful woman *in posse*. Even in a child of grace good looks could only be tolerated as it were under protest. And vitality was altogether inconsistent with a changed nature. Altogether Pauline was glad to get back to her friends in the corner, who for the most part were outsiders like herself.

On such occasions the evening dinner was dispensed with, and the lords of creation got instructions to dine in town. On this particular evening, however, Mr. Crawfurd, with his sons James and Hugh, dined with Mr. Keith, and Mr. Challoner and Tom were of the party. All these gentlemen's domestic arrangements had been more or less disturbed by the sewing meeting, and they revenged themselves by abusing the institution to each other over their dinner. Nevertheless they enjoyed themselves, and their meeting was harmonious, which was

perhaps more than could be said of the other one.

At six o'clock the ladies adjourned downstairs to the dining-room for tea. At tea the conversation became general, and even, with the second cup, gossipy. And gradually the gossip worked round to the special scandal which everyone had expected would form the staple entertainment of the evening.

But really, it is time to introduce Mrs. Crawfurd herself. Well, then, to begin with, she was an irreproachable woman—the sort of woman whose dress always hangs well, whose ribbons are always crisp, whose lace is never crumpled—who did not know the meaning of the word "dishabille." The most riotous baby never seemed able to ruffle her cap-strings—she could watch, night after night, at a sickbed without getting either her dress, or her hair, or her nerves out of order, and she was so capable and sagacious that her friends were greatly in the habit of relying upon her in emergencies. She was tall, and her figure might have been fuller with advantage. Her features were good, but her face had a pinched look. Her lips were thin, her eyes cold, and her cheeks colourless, though

she had the remains of a once fine and clear complexion. Her hair was of that shade of very light brown that seems peculiar to very correct people, and is so long in turning grey. In fact, the Mary Huntly Mr. Keith spoke of must have been pretty. But her youthful contours had hardened into the virginal angularities of an old maid, instead of the comfortable placidities of the matron. Her motherhood of many children had not slackened the uprightness of her bearing, or impaired the elasticity of her step. She gave one the impression of having been planned as one of those Madonna-like women who satisfy the eye and the spirit with the fulness of their large natures, and of having shrivelled up in early womanhood—an impression, in fact, of arrested development. She was fitly typified by her voice, and, as Keith Dunbar once said, "her voice was like an east wind." But in her hard, narrow way, Mrs. Crawfurd was a good woman —resolute in duty, and rigidly truthful even in the excitement of gossip, which is more than could be said for some better people. She was staunch in her friendships and equally staunch in her dislikes. She was a kind and indulgent mother as regards all material things, and yet

more or less starved her children's natures for want of sympathy. She was liberal and self-denying in her giving of time, trouble, and substance for the benefit of others—regarding her benefactions as bribes to induce the recipients to walk the more strenuously in what she laid down as the right way. Was it altogether her fault that she did not give what she had not got —sympathy? How should such a strong, faultless woman, who had never known an overmastering emotion or an unfulfilled duty—how should she have sympathy with the aberrations of fuller or weaker natures?

Such was Mary Crawfurd as she sat at the head of her tea-table, handsomely dressed in black silk and old lace, the very personification of "prunes and prism." But this estimable woman was experiencing a new sensation, an uneasy feeling of possible wrongdoing on her part—a misgiving that perhaps she had not been quite just to Violet Danby. And so when that young lady became the subject of conversation, Mrs. Crawfurd embraced the opportunity of justifying her own conduct to herself.

One of the mothers in Israel opened the ball :—

"You have not got a new governess yet, Mrs. Crawfurd?" she said.

"Have you parted with Miss Danby, then?" asked another, before Mrs. Crawfurd could reply.

"I had to send her away," said that lady in a tone of superior virtue, "she was altogether too worldly and too light in her conduct for a Christian household."

"Indeed?" said several ladies at once. They evidently regarded this as the official announcement of the subject of discussion, and their tones said as plainly as words, "Please tell us all about it."

"I was always afraid," interpolated the first speaker, "that it was scarcely prudent to have such a young person in the house with your sons." Which speech, being interpreted, means, in plain English, that the association of a young man with a young and pretty woman was certain to result in disaster. Miss Danby had committed the unpardonable crime of being graciously beautiful and sweet.

"My sons," replied the virtuous hostess, "have been too well brought up to have anything to do with young women in her position. But all young men have not had their advantages,

and it seemed to me that Miss Danby did not always keep young men at their proper distance." What the "proper distance" was, Mrs. Crawfurd did not explain, but her audience understood her perfectly well. A good many of the ancient dames went in for the same "vicarious" propriety in their own cases as a set off against the flirtations of their youth.

"She was very young," suggested Miss Susan Fairlie, a lame old maid, who had kept her natural kindness of heart.

"She was not too young to encourage young men to talk to her," replied Mrs. Crawfurd with an emphasis that implied some impropriety in Miss Fairlie's defence.

"I don't think the young men ever required any encouragement to talk to Violet," said Elsie, who had been longing to say some word in defence of her friend. "Even my cousin Keith used to talk to her, and he doesn't waste his time much in talking to girls." To Elsie's mind Keith's interest in Violet was the strongest possible proof of her worth no less than of her attractions.

"It is a pity Keith ever wasted his time talking to Miss Danby," was Mrs. Crawfurd's

retort. "Your cousin, Elspeth, is only a young man after all, and is as likely to be led away as other young men."

"I don't think he is," said Elsie, who was a brave girl in defence of those she loved, "and Violet is as good a girl as ever lived." And Elsie's cheeks flushed and her eyes glowed with a generous indignation as she flung down her challenge.

"You are quite right to stand up for your friends, Elsie dear," said gentle Mrs. Challoner, "but you must let other people have their own opinions, even where they differ from yours. You and I believe in Violet, but everybody is not obliged to do the same."

"Where is Miss Danby now?" asked the first mother in Israel, because that was the first thing that came into her head, and she had an idea of turning the conversation.

"You had better ask Miss Keith," said Mrs. Crawfurd, icily, "or perhaps Dr. Dunbar would know."

"She is married, and living in Glasgow," said Elsie simply.

"I am glad to hear she is married," said Mrs. Crawfurd, with a toss of her head which said

plainly enough, "But it's more than I expected."

"Have you seen her, Elsie?" one of the girls asked.

"Oh yes, she called on me the other day," said Elsie, as if Violet's visit had been the most natural thing in the world. Mrs. Challoner seemed to be going to speak, but checked herself; and the first mother in Israel, by way of carrying on the conversation easily, put the question:—

"How do you know she is married, Miss Keith?"

Now Elsie was not used to having her word doubted, and she was a proud sensitive girl to boot. What appeared to her a direct attack on her friend's honour roused her to a new indignation. She drew herself up, looked her interlocutor straight in the eyes, and said with clear deliberate emphasis that carried conviction to her hearers:—

"It should be enough that I say it, Mrs. McSlimon."

It was enough. Elsie had established her friend's reputation upon an unassailable basis, and the interest died out of the subject when it

appeared there was to be no scandal. So other victims were selected for vivisection, and the ghoul's banquet proceeded.

By-and-by, they all returned to the drawing-room. On the way Miss Susan Fairlie was being helped upstairs by Elsie and Pauline. She pressed her poor old withered hand on Elsie's shoulder :—

"Eh, Miss Elspeth," she said, "that was spoken like yer faither's dochter. I'm real glad ye spak up for the puir young thing. She was jist as winsome and bonnie a lass as could well be, and she was as kin' as yersel'. I min' she aye helpit me up the stairs when I was here. I'm feart there's an unco speerit o' detraction among us whiles. An' we're aye some hard on the young folks, I'm thinking."

"I could not but speak for her," said Elsie, "I love her dearly. But what did Mrs. Crawfurd mean about Keith ?"

"Aweel," said Miss Susan, "I wadna' fash about that, gin I wer' you. Mary Crawfurd's no that fond o' yer cousin."

"I am sure," said Pauline, "she meant something bad."

In the drawing-room the ladies broke up into

knots again, and did more talking and less work than before. Towards eight o'clock the gentlemen began to arrive, and a good deal of the work, consisting of—well, garments—was cleared away. When Tom Challoner arrived with the young Crawfurds, he found Mr. Peter McSlimon, junior, engaged, with the assistance of the Rev. Gervase Iler—a young divine of prepossessing appearance and limited intellect, in making himself agreeable to Pauline and Elsie and their friends. These worthies were parading the small talk supposed to be appropriate to the occasion and suitable to the feminine intellect, but to their surprise their vast condescension was quite lost upon the benighted damsels. Tom's advent put an end to these *bêtises*. He got hold of a friend of his and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Rey, and introduced them to the group. Very soon the conversation took a more natural tone. Mr. Rey—very curiously for a leading member of Little Zion—had a strong natural vein of humour, and a power of invention not inferior to Tom's own. So they were very soon "swopping yarns"—as Mr. Carmichael described it when he came in—to the enjoyment even of the vapid young men they had supplanted,

and who, in turn, began to evince a joviality and naturalness very foreign to their usual demeanour. Mr. Carmichael and Mr. Keith joined the group in company with Miss Susan Fairlie, and the hilarity grew apace when Mr. Rey and Tom Challoner had to match themselves against Uncle Harry's power of invention and Mr. Keith's dry humour. Mrs. Crawfurd was quite scandalised as the laughter from this group, mingled in her venerable ears with the hymn-singing from another group round the piano. This was the consequence of bringing worldlings into the sacred circle—the elect themselves led astray by vanity and frivolity. There was Miss Susan Fairlie, laughing till the tears ran down her old cheeks, and Mrs. McSlimon holding her fat sides. Even the young divine was joining in the talk with an almost godless vivacity, while the elder pastor—a man of singularly discerning spirit—was looking on, with her husband, both of them evidently much amused. That her son James should be joining in the laughter, was not astonishing—he was led away by Tom Challoner, and was a friend of Keith Dunbar. But Hugh, the solemn—ah well! he was devoting himself to Pauline; she must be

a clever girl to make Hugh laugh so much.

However, Mrs. Crawfurd bore down upon the group and carried off Mr. Carmichael to present him to his contemporaries. Then she penned Mr. Keith in a corner to give the " piece of her mind " she had cut off for him.

But Mrs. Crawfurd's manœuvres were of no avail. Carmichael was evidently the same graceless Harry he had been in old times, and scandalised his douce home-staying contemporaries with talk of a fine Western flavour, considerably more racy than pious. Soon the hymn-singing ceased, and all the guests became one group of animated talkers and listeners. Even tabooed subjects cropped up, and were discussed with unwonted liberality. But as the hour grew late the talk insensibly grew graver, and when at ten o'clock the pastor dismissed the flock with a benediction, the guests departed with an unusual feeling of regret for the ending of a pleasant evening.

The Keith-Challoner party, however, were to stay to supper, and when they went downstairs Mrs. Crawfurd managed to detain Mr. Keith in the drawing-room.

"Will you tell me, Archibald Keith," she said, "how it comes that my boy is not good enough for your daughter?"

"I have other plans for Elsie," he replied, "and I don't want my daughter bothered with thoughts of marriage for a year or two yet. I have considered the matter, and I have told Hugh what I think about it. Believe me, things are better left as they are."

"I suppose if Harry Carmichael hadn't a son, my boy would have been good enough for your girl. You are looking out for riches for your daughter, after all. You are just like other worldlings, Archie."

"Harry has no son," said Mr. Keith, "and my plans were made before I knew of his coming home."

"Then I suppose," said Mrs. Crawfurd, "you mean her for that frivolous Tom Challoner, or that stuck-up Keith Dunbar? Mark my words, Archibald, that Keith will bring you trouble yet. I suppose you know that it was through him that Violet Danby went away?"

"I know nothing of the sort, Mary," said Mr. Keith. "You always had a dislike to the lad. But this talk is useless—allow me."

And Mrs. Crawfurd found herself escorted

downstairs without having brought "Archie Keith" to any sense of the error of his ways. Then at supper Keith's name came up again, and Mr. Carmichael, who was sitting next to Mrs. Crawfurd, happened to remark:—

"What a smart young fellow that Keith is, to be sure!"

"I only know," said Mrs. Crawfurd, speaking low, but not so low but Pauline heard what she said, "he showed himself very smart in turning my governess's foolish head. It is all very well for Elspeth to talk of Miss Danby being married. I hope she is, I am sure. I only know Keith took her away, and, if he has married her, it is the least he can do."

Mr. Carmichael told Mr. Keith about this as they walked home, and was, of course, put in possession of the real facts of the case. But it did not occur to Pauline to ask about Violet's husband, and her companions—Tom and Elsie—making merry over the tea-table incident, sufficiently vindicated Keith from Mrs. Crawfurd's charges. So Pauline for the time thought no more about the matter, but the course of events would have been very different if she had indulged in a little impertinent curiosity on this occasion.

CHAPTER VI.

PLANS.

"My Brethren," said the Fox, preaching to the geese,
"the Lord knoweth, how I long for you all."

THE next morning Elsie and her father found themselves together in the breakfast-room before the others came down. Mr. Keith had assumed the "customary attitude" of the British *père de famille*, in spite of the absence of the fire. Elsie came up to him as he stood on the hearth-rug, put a hand on each of his shoulders, and kissed him:

"Do you know, my daddy," she said, "I have a bone to pick with you?"

"Have you, Miss Consequence? A wishing-bone, I suppose?"

"Oh dear me, no. A much uglier bone than that."

"Well, let us have it."

"Can you deny that a nice young man has been wanting to marry me, and yet you haven't told me a word about it? How do you know, sir,

that I am not pining away for that nice young man?"

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Keith; then, after a pause, he went on: "What has Hugh Crawfurd been saying to you, little woman?"

"Oh, Hugh hadn't a word for me; his attention was quite taken up with Pauline."

"Has Mrs. Crawfurd been talking to you, then?" asked Mr. Keith.

"No. We had what Tom would call a 'shine' about Violet at tea time, and she wouldn't speak to me after that."

"Then what do you know about it? You don't care for him, dearie—do you? Surely you cannot—"

"No, my dear daddy, I don't care for him at all. It is only that I have a secret, and I don't like keeping secrets from my daddy."

"Well, dear, what is your secret?"

"Only that I know about Violet's marriage."

"Well, what next?" said Mr. Keith. "How ever did you get to know that?"

"Violet came to see me last week, and told me all about it. You see she knew about this proposal; it is the best thing I know of Hugh that he told her about it. It did not seem nice

to be making a hollow proposal, and yet Hugh could not get out of it, especially as it was his mother who spoke to you about it. There was no way of getting out of it except by declaring the marriage, and that Hugh was not prepared to do. So Violet thought the best thing was to come and tell me all about it. She wasn't going to have me played with, she said."

"She is a good lass," said Mr. Keith, "and it would have been a shame to have let the thing go on I don't know that she could have done better—unless, indeed, she had come to me."

"Well, you see, she wanted to tell me about her marriage at anyrate."

"And it seems to me," continued Mr. Keith, not noticing Elsie's last speech, "that if Hugh Crawfurd had any spirit, he would have declared his marriage sooner than allow himself to be put in such a false position."

Here their talk was interrupted by the entrance of Pauline, who was followed almost immediately by her father and Keith. They sat down to breakfast and the conversation became general. After a time it turned on the proceedings of the night before:—

"What have you been doing to Mrs. Craw-

furd, Keith?" asked his Uncle. "She seems more than ever set against you."

"Nothing, that I know of," Keith answered, with a smile, "I don't think I need to do anything."

"She gives you a nice character, anyhow, young man," said Mr. Carmichael.

"She does indeed," said Pauline. "She was trying to insinuate all sorts of dreadful things about you last night."

"That is her way," said Keith, still smiling. "Mrs. Crawfurd likes to have a black sheep handy to measure her own virtue by. Miss Danby has been a godsend to her in that line, and I have always been Hugh's black sheep. It amuses the old lady, you see, and it doesn't hurt me."

Here Elsie began to laugh:—

"She wanted to say, Keith, that you had run away with Miss Danby."

"Wanted to say?" interposed Mr. Carmichael. "She said it."

"She did indeed," said Pauline, "and she said too——" and then Pauline, for the first time recognising the significance of Mrs. Crawfurd's words, blushed and hesitated.

"I can fancy her delicate way of putting the case," said Keith. "I expect I offended her when she told me about sending the girl away. She was good enough to say that she had done so on my account. I am afraid I was hardly grateful. I had only seen Miss Danby once or twice, and had hardly done more than exchanged words with her. Even supposing Mrs. Crawfurd's idea of her was true, it still seemed to me that she had been badly treated in her sudden dismissal; and I believe I expressed my opinion in tolerably plain English. These theoretical 'miserable sinners,' you see, can't bear the accusation of practical wrongdoing. After all, it is little wonder the old lady is down upon me; but I do think she might have chosen a more likely scapegoat when she was about it."

"I am not so sure of that," said Mr. Keith. "All she needed was a story that would go down with Little Zion. And, you know, the Little Zion people expect you to go wrong some time."

"Ah! Christian charity, I suppose!" said Keith. "It is pleasant to know oneself so important that one's downfall is required to show the truth of a theological system. But

I must go," he added, rising. "Your ladyships will remember the arrangement for the afternoon?"

"Do you know, my daddy," Elsie said, after Keith had left the room, "I think Mrs. Crawfurd meant more than mere gossip for Little Zion. I fancy she got frightened at what she had done to Violet, and that she had an idea that if she could get Keith to feel himself entangled, or to blame in any way, or responsible for her dismissal, that he would marry her."

"Hm! very possible," said her father. "Keith would be very sensitive on a point of honour, and doubly sensitive where a woman was concerned. Certainly, if Mrs. Crawfurd had wanted to bring about such a marriage, she could not have set about it better. Yes," Mr. Keith went on, half-thinking aloud apparently, "and it fits in well with her later manœuvres."

"It seems to me," said Mr. Carmichael, "that Elsie's theory has a good deal in it. Mrs. Crawfurd probably wanted Miss Danby out of the way, for fear Hugh should take a fancy to her. She would count on her going home at once. And when that expectation was falsified she was likely enough to try this other game.

Mary was always a woman of resource—Eh! Archie, I quite think she reckoned on humbugging Keith."

"But Keith seems so very reserved," objected Pauline. "One would think he wouldn't be easily humbugged."

"It is astonishing," said Mr. Carmichael, "how Quixotic these cool, hard-headed fellows can be at times. They are just the men to sacrifice their lives for a woman's fancy or a point of honour. Keith is his mother's own son too—there's a good deal in that."

"You should have seen Mrs. Crawfurd when I told her Violet was married and had called on me," said Elsie. "Did you see how she tossed her head, Pauline?"

"It was almost a wonder her cap didn't come off," said Pauline, "but she looked, too, as if she had got something she wanted in the information."

"I can't help thinking," said Elsie, "that somebody has been making stories to her about Keith. I never knew her so bitter as she was yesterday. She seemed so vindictive in what she said. And it is not as though she were a false woman."

"It is exceedingly likely," said Mr. Keith, "that she has been deceived about Keith, and that whoever deceived her counted on our not hearing much gossip."

Breakfast was nearly over when letters were brought in.

"Well, Harry," said Mr. Keith, after he had looked over his correspondence, "have you got those advices?"

"Yes," said Mr. Carmichael. "There is no hurry after all. I can knock about here for three months at least—off and on, you know. And then, Polly, we must see about your winter in Paris among the studios."

"That's right, so we'll get away to Rosebank as soon as possible. When can you be ready, Elsie?" said Mr. Keith, briskly. "I suppose you will want all sorts of fal-lals before you can start?"

"And you, miss," Mr. Carmichael said to his daughter, "I suppose you will want some fixings?"

"You had better, both of you, see to your shopping at once," said Mr. Keith, "and I will write Duncan to tell his wife to expect us next Thursday."

"But we were to go out with Keith this afternoon," said Elsie.

"I'll let him know your whereabouts," said her father. "You had better lunch at Forrester's —say at 1.30, and he can meet you there. I will tell Tom to see about him."

The elders took their leave, and their ladyships formed themselves into a committee of ways and means to consider the wardrobe question. It was carried unanimously, "That a dressmaker be consulted forthwith," and they immediately proceeded to carry the resolution into effect, by waiting upon Madame Finniquin, of West Regent Street, in order to receive the instructions of that august High Priestess of Fashion.

Madame Finniquin's establishment, as everyone knows, is close to Blythswood Square; so that Pauline and Elsie were not surprised, on leaving it, to find themselves walking down West Regent Street, close behind Mrs. Crawfurd and her son Hugh.

If the present chronicler were not already somewhat exceeding his prescribed space in telling this story, the next half-dozen pages might be appropriately filled with a rhapsody on

this beautiful spectacle of the saintly mother and her saintlier son in "high converse joined." Really, when one comes to think of it, it is the most orthodox situation the narrative has yet produced, and it would form an admirable peg whereon

"Reflection might hang a moral."

But the conditions of space are inexorable. There is, however, a direction frequently appended to medical prescriptions which exactly meets the circumstances of the case:—

"Aq. quant. suff."

The reader is recommended to dilute to taste.

To proceed. Mrs. Crawfurd was addressing the meeting, and, as she was one of those admirable persons who emphasise their integrity as it were by habitually speaking in a loud and challenging tone of voice, Pauline and Elsie, walking behind, got the benefit of her remarks. It is needless to remark that the latter, knowing what she did, was peculiarly edified.

"What I cannot understand is why Keith manages to keep this marriage secret so long. Your father says the secrecy is enough to show that Keith is not the man. But I don't know. Keith is proud and he is poor, and it is hardly

likely that he would care to have it known that he has made such a fool of himself. Where does he hide the girl, I wonder?"

"Keith is not the fellow," said Hugh, diplomatically, "to let out anything he chooses to keep secret." This young gentleman, it may be remarked, particularly prided himself upon his invariable adherence to the literal truth. "Ter-uth, my friends, is never a lie," said the Rev. Chadband—but then the Rev. Chadband was an ass. There is no such square, well-ballasted lie, as a misplaced truth. In fact, a lie might well be defined like dirt, as "truth in the wrong place."

The girls stopped as soon as they found they were overhearing this precious conversation. They went round by the parallel St. Vincent Street, only to meet mother and son full-face at the corner of West Nile Street.

As they walked on together, Hugh tried to monopolise Pauline, but she would not leave Elsie; and Elsie was talking to Mrs. Crawfurd, and, to Hugh's horror, was talking about Violet. He "could not choose but hear."

"But I don't think she should keep her marriage secret," Mrs. Crawfurd was saying.

"I think you must take me to see her, and I will talk to her about it."

"Certainly," said Elsie, with a mischievous glance at Hugh, "though I hardly know how to manage it. You see, we are going to Rosebank in a few days. But perhaps I may be able to persuade her to come to Rosebank."

"With her husband?" asked Mrs. Crawfurd, sarcastically.

"I'm afraid not. Her husband has a prejudice against bringing her amongst her old friends. I believe," Elsie went on very suavely, "he is in business, and has to be away from her a good deal; so I may be able to get her to come to Rosebank and meet you."

"No, thank you," said Mrs. Crawfurd, stiffly. "I can quite understand her husband may not wish her to meet me. What do you think, Hugh?"

But Hugh pretended to be taken up with Pauline.

"Oh—ah! just so," he said, abstractedly, as though he had scarcely heard the question. Then he shook hands with the girls. "Are you coming to the office, mother?" he asked.

"No, but wait a minute, Hugh." Then, turn-

ing to Pauline, Mrs. Crawfurd went on: "Will you tell your father that we shall expect you both for a long visit at Inellan?" Then she explained to Elsie:—"We are thinking of letting Glenfinlas this season."

"Thanks, very much, Mrs. Crawfurd," said Pauline. "I believe we are already engaged, but I will tell my father, and probably you may see him yourself."

"Very well, then, we will see what he says. Meantime, good morning."

"Good morning," said the girls as they went off.

"Hugh," said Mrs. Crawfurd as soon as they were alone, "go up at once to your father, and tell him never to mind about the house at Inellan, and not to let Glenfinlas; we'll just go to our own place this year, as usual."

"Why, mother," said Hugh, "this morning nothing would suit you but going to Inellan. Whatever will father say?"

"Your father will say he is very glad. See about it at once, now, before it is too late."

"Now that is put in order!" said Mrs. Crawfurd to herself as she walked down Buchanan Street. "I don't suppose we could have got

them away from Keith's altogether, and at any-rate we shall have them as neighbours all the summer; and, with Keith married and Tom Challoner busy with Elsie, surely Hugh should have a good chance with the girl. He will be a fool if he lets the chance slip. She is a fine girl too, and then there's her fortune into the bargain. Harry is rich, it seems. That will be better than marrying a governess."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SANGREAL.

"Here, where the world is quiet;
Here, where all trouble seems
Spent winds and dead waves' riot
And doubtful dreams of dreams."

A. C. Swinburne.

ROSEBANK was a pretty, creeper-covered, low, rambling house, standing in a sunny hollow on the western shore of Loch Dhuil. All around, sheltering groves of larch and fir deployed their ghostly companies along the hill-side, rank above rank, in what seemed a ceaseless, silent march to outflank the encroaching sea. The house looked southwards from under its verandah, over a broad terrace and the slope of its lawn, along the shelving sands of a little bay, round which the seaward skirts of the forest stretched to a low wooded promontory. Beyond lay the waters of the loch, girt by a rugged semicircle of mountains:—fir slopes rising to heathery moorlands; beetling precipices, down which tiny streams wavered in smoke-like

waterfalls. No other house was in sight, no sign of human life to break the sacred silences of nature. Silently the great clouds towered in blue depths of sky; silently the shadows flitted over olive and purple moorlands; silently the sun-lighted ripples lapped on the beach—only in the forest a low susurrus of rustling leaves, and twittering birds, and faltering streams.

> "A sound as of a hidden brook
> In the leafy month of June,
> That to the sleeping woods all night
> Singeth a quiet tune."

Life at Rosebank was one long idyll—an idyll of peace and sunshine; of mist and storm and rain.

The idyll began for Pauline when they left the pier at Greenock, and she stood on the bridge of the steamer, with Elsie and Keith, looking over the gleaming waters of the beautiful land-locked firth. Swiftly the good ship clove the crisp-curling waves, opening the long reaches of the lower firth as she crossed to the wood-shores of Argyll. The fresh morning breeze stirred the girl's hair, and brought the colour into her cheeks. Keith would have been puzzled to say whether his first acquaintance of the lamplight, or this bright-faced girl with

the wind-tossed hair, were the more beautiful. Past beautiful Kilcreggan, and more beautiful Cove, they sailed into a lovely loch, and left the firth behind. Past the wooded corries and fir-crowned shoulders of Finnartmore, by beaches of silver sand with soft river-meadows beyond:—by fir-clothed hills:—by swelling moorlands:—through the gloom of beetling precipices and overhanging crags, the "Gareloch" worked her way into the heart of the mountain land. More and more the circling hills closed in till the ship seemed almost end-on to a frowning cliff. A sudden turn, and she steamed into the lower reach of Loch Dhuil. On the right, a semi-circular range of hills rose abruptly out of the water:—on the left, one lovely bay after another curved round to the north and east till the further point seemed to meet the cliffs of the eastern range. Rounding this point, they found themselves in a great amphitheatre forming the head of the loch. Silver sands were lost in grey-green meadows, and, beyond, the dark woodlands stretched to the purple moorlands; and the moorlands rose to the scarped peaks, each standing out clear-cut and distinct—a soft olive darkness against the soft blue sky.

"Oh, how beautiful!" said Pauline. "And are we to live here?"

"Yes," said Keith, "shall you like it, do you think?"

"Yes, I shall like it," she said softly, "it will be like living in fairyland."

"You will have no lack of subjects for sketching, Pauline," said Elsie.

"Sketching!" said Pauline. "But who could paint those shadows?—and yet, I should like to try. But, oh dear me! I have neither canvas nor colours, and there is no town here where we can get them."

"Oh, we can send to Glasgow for them by whoever is going up first," was Elsie's comforting reply. "Can't we, Keith?"

"Certainly," said Keith. "I'll see about it. But I must go and tell the captain that Duncan is to meet us." He found the captain and told him about stopping. Then he took out his pocketbook and wrote a note.

"Look here, Mr. McDonald," he said to the captain, "could you send a man up to McLure's in Buchanan Street for these things? They are for Miss Carmichael there. I know you like to oblige a lady."

"Vera weel, doctor," said the captain, "I'se hae them here the morn's mornin'."

"Thank you, captain," said Keith, "I will send out a boat for them."

By this time the engines had been stopped, and the "Gareloch" was slowly forging ahead toward a small boat in which a man stood up ready to catch the rope another man on board the steamer was ready to fling. The rope duly thrown and caught, the boat was hauled to the platform of the paddle-box. Keith jumped in, and the captain handed Elsie and then Pauline over the side. The latter, not accustomed to these small boats, nearly fell, in leaving the steamer. Keith caught her, however; so no harm was done, but the thrill of pleasure he felt as she fell into his arms was a new symptom of the young man's heart-complaint. Then the luggage was piled up in the bow, and the rope cast off; the steamer's paddles began to turn, and she churned her white way up the loch.

Keith and Elsie shook hands with Duncan, and introduced him to Pauline, telling him he was to consider that young lady as specially in his charge.

"Now, Duncan," said Keith, when these

preliminaries were over, "you make yourself agreeable to these young people, while I pull ashore. I want a stretch."

"Vera weel, Doctor," Duncan responded, and proceeded to carry out his instructions by asking numerous questions about Mr. Keith and answering another series anent his wife.

Duncan belonged to the Ancient Mariner type of animated nature. He was almost picturesque in his way, but the maritime promise of his nether man was only indifferently carried out in the starched collar and decorous coat he had thought proper to assume out of respect to his visitors. A hale and hearty old man was Duncan, and his unassuming simplicity of manner would have carried off a greater incongruity than that between his collar and his sea-boots. The collar belonged to Mr. McTavish, elder in the Kirk; the boots and jersey to Duncan McTavish, fisherman and factotum-general at Rosebank. He was the same man in both offices.

On the beach they were welcomed by Duncan's wife, Kirsty—a picturesque, grey-haired, bright-eyed old woman, very dapper and neat, from her sloe-black shoes to the crossed white kerchief on

her breast, and the crowning glory of her "mutch."

"Eh, ma bonnie doo!" she said to Elsie, "but it's you that's the sicht for sair e'en. An' you're looking brawly. But wha's the bonny leddy?" she added in a whisper. "Is't Mistress Keith? Eh, but she's the winsome lass."

"Well, haven't I to be spoken to?" said Keith coming up to shake hands with the old woman. "You'll be glad enough to speak to me the night when Tom Challoner's here. That's a grand mutch, Kirsty, and Tom'll be wanting to see how he looks in it; and who's going to hinder him if I'm no in wi' ye?"

"Eh, sirs me, Maister Keith, ye maunna let him get ma mutch."

Kirsty took the girls off to the house, and Keith got Duncan to take him out in the boat for a swim. When he returned he found lunch waiting in the dining-room. After lunch they adjourned out of doors, or rather out of windows. A raised platform ran along the front of the house, under the broad verandah. Through the open window Keith handed out on to this platform the wherewithal for making a

pleasant afternoon of it—three lounge-chairs, one little round table, a bottle of claret, a box of cigars, ditto of matches, and a plate of fruit. Then he invited the ladies to come out and make themselves comfortable, and straightway proceeded to set them a praiseworthy example of how to do so.

Pauline was the first to come. She leant back in her chair, with dreamy eyes fixed on the far-off hills. She had hardly spoken since she had got into this enchanted land, and now Keith, seeing she wanted to be quiet, did not trouble her with talk, but quietly smoked his cigar and looked at her in a lazy meditation. She was dressed in grey homespun, and the simple dress showed her figure to perfection and set off her delicate complexion. Her face, in the soft shadow, was full of a dreamy quiet—a soft restfulness that seemed half-longing—a nameless and tender beauty that Keith had never seen in a woman's face before. It was the ecstasy of the nature-worshipper—the reflection of the glory without in the pure woman-soul within, a gleam of "the light that never shone on sea or land." And Keith saw it. It was as though he had seen the sangreal pulsing in his cigar-smoke.

He turned away—following the direction of her eyes. Away in the south, soft olive-grey ridges rose out of a sapphire sea, and melted into a sea-blue sky. Soft, tender lights faded and flickered over purple-grey moorlands, and softer shadows followed ghostlike in their train or lay ambushed in woods and glens and corries; and one grey cliff loomed gaunt and shadowy beyond a space of shining sea. A favourite verse began beating itself out in Keith's brain, as such verses will do at times, till presently he found himself quoting it half aloud:—

> "I am pale with sick desire,
> And my heart is far away,
> From this world's fitful fire,
> And from this world's waning day:
> In a dream it overleaps
> A world of tedious ills
> To where the sunshine sleeps
> On the everlasting hills."

Pauline turned to him with her eyes still full of dreams:

"Oh, I do like that!" she said. "Will you say it again?"

So Keith repeated the verse again, and Pauline sat turned towards him as he spoke, till he almost seemed to see his vision again amid the dreams in her beautiful eyes.

> "To where the sunshine sleeps
> On the everlasting hills."

Pauline repeated softly, as she leant back again, "It is very beautiful!"

Then they talked—as only thoughtful and well-informed people can talk. Both had that feeling for the problems of life and nature which is the mark of the modern spirit:—speculations, thoughts, fancies, came naturally into such talk, more than half-serious, and yet ready enough to pass into humour. By the time Elsie joined them, each had found in the other that sense of comradeship which is the most genuine basis either of friendship or love.

So they sat and talked amid "the golden afternoon," till the talk came to a pause with the end of Keith's second cigar, and in the pause the seriousness of course vanished. The young man began on a new tack with another quotation:—

> "The time is come, the Walrus said,
> To talk of many things."

"I might suggest, young ladies, that the afternoon is well advanced, and you have not decided what to do with it."

They settled to walk through the wood by the shore, and when they came back it was time to be thinking of the good folks who were to arrive by the evening steamer. It was decided that,

instead of sending out the "tub" for them, Keith should drive the waggonette to the pier, a couple of miles up the loch, and that Pauline should go with him, while Elsie looked after her household arrangements.

So the two drove through the woods; over the shoulder of the hill, looking down, as they went, through long vistas of greenery, to the shimmering sea; and along the lochside in the afternoon shadow. Keith fastened up his ponies, and let Pauline on to the little pier to wait for "the boat." They were still in shadow, as were also the lower slopes of the opposite hills; but, further up, a great glen let the light fall full on all the upper reach of the loch till it shone like a mirror of steel. Presently a column of smoke rose over the southern headland, and then the steamer came into sight and forged up to the pier.

They soon rattled back, and after dinner was well over they decided to go out fishing, as a fitting conclusion to the dissipations of the day. They pulled out into the loch, beyond the point, and had a merry time of it as they let down their lines and caught their fish. It was not a particularly scientific performance, and silence

was by no means considered essential to success. When they set out, the night had not yet fallen; all the loch lay in a great shadowy stillness, but beyond the glen, at its head, the great peaks still flamed in the sunset light. But peak after peak died out into darkness; and one by one the stars came out in the blue vault and shimmered in the glassy depths below. The young folks' laughter died out as the silence deepened round them; even the fishing was stopped, and they drifted over the silent sea. "Sing, Elsie and Tom," said Mr. Keith, "sing the song of the stars." And the girl's clear voice rose sweet and calm into the still night.

"See how peaceful, star with star,
Thro' the heavens doth wander,
Jarring feud or noise of war
Never cometh yonder."

Then Tom's deep voice took up the next verse:—

"Mark, how peaceful, wave o'er wave,
Flows the tranquil river
To its mighty ocean grave,
Gliding on for ever."

And then they sang together to the end:—

"Life shall flow then, free from jars,
Like the tranquil river;
Till we, soaring o'er the stars,
Dwell in peace for ever."

Then they were still. They seemed to float

in the midst of a great silence, between the star-sown vault above, and the star-filled depths below. All around, the great mountains lifted their shadowy bulk to the quiet heavens, and the night seemed full of the mystery of their patient waiting for the unresting stars.

By-and-by the young folks pulled silently ashore, and went soberly up to the house. Then came lights and a cosy supper, followed by whist and bezique. Then everybody went off to bed, and so ended the first day of Pauline's Idyll.

CHAPTER VIII.

VIOLET'S SONG.

"What the years mean; how time dies and is not slain;
How love grows, and laughs, and cries, and wanes again—
These were things she came to know, and take their measure,
When the play was played out so for one man's pleasure."

A. C. Swinburne.

WITH the morning Pauline found herself in a new world. Yesterday's far-off hills, tremulously flickering in soft lights and softer shadows, now towered up strong and clear against the morning light, casting mighty shadows halfway over the loch, and filling the shadows with reflections in its clear silent flowing waters. All was changed but the silence and the stillness, and the sense of isolation from the world. The still clear morning air was charged with sleepy noises from far-off waterfalls and brawling burns. Pauline, as an artist, knew something of the wizardry of light, but she had never seen anything so wonderful as its effects in the ever-changing beauty of this weird mountain-land. She still

went about like some ecstatic saint who had had a vision of the heavenly city, the

"Urbs beata, urbs tranquilla,"

and it was long before the rapt visionary look left her face.

"What has come over you, my dear?" asked Mr. Keith as they stood on the lawn, in the early morning, just above the low sea-wall. "You seem to have lost your voice."

Pauline drew a long breath:—"It is all so beautiful," she said, "I have not got used to it yet."

"It is beautiful," was the reply. "After all these years, I think it is more beautiful every time I see it." And the old man's thoughts wandered sadly back to memories of the dear wife whose presence had once gladdened the beautiful scene, and whose grave still sanctified its glory. "I think," he went on, half to himself, "I should like to die here when the time comes, and be buried in the old kirkyard yonder. Ay, lassie, you young folks think of life; but we, who are older, begin to get tired with our long day's work, and to think of our rest. Eh, Harry?"

"Well," said Carmichael, "that is not far

wrong, only, on our side of the water, a man don't get much time to think; he drops out of his work into his grave, and does his thinking afterwards. But see here, Archie!—isn't Elspeth buried up there? and Helen? I should like to see the place."

"We will drive up, Harry, some time to-day or to-morrow, you and I. But, dear me," and Mr. Keith turned to Pauline, "this is no talk for young folks. Wouldn't you like to paint this, my dear?"

"I should indeed," said Pauline, "only I have forgotten to provide myself with materials." (She turned to her father.) "Will you get me some, papa, first time you go to Glasgow?"

"There's no need to wait," said Mr. Keith. "We'll just send a bit note to McLure's and have the things here to-morrow. Keith," he called out, and Keith and Tom came up from the boats they had been overhauling on the beach. "Keith, just send a note to McLure's to-day for an outfit of painting-materials to be sent down at once."

Keith smiled mischievously. "I sent that note yesterday," he explained. "Captain

McDonald promised to send a man for them and to bring them to-day.

"That was right, Keith," said his uncle, "I am glad you thought of it."

Pauline opened her eyes in astonishment, looking first at one and then at the other.

"How good of you," she said to Keith. "But I never dreamt of putting you to the trouble."

"Oh, there's no trouble at all," said Mr. Keith. "You'll just take the things as a present from Keith and Elsie and myself, and I will give you a commission when you have selected the views you would like to paint."

"You have heard of Scotch hospitality, Polly," said Mr. Carmichael. "Now you are beginning to know something about it."

Keith did not go unrewarded. Pauline was touched by the frank kindness of his action, and no less by his readiness to relieve her from any embarrassment of acceptance by making the gift appear his uncle's.

"I shall always remember your kindness," she said to him as they turned to follow the others in to breakfast.

"Do you get any letters in these parts?" Mr. Carmichael asked as they sat down.

"We have ours sent down by the steamer from the office," said Mr. Keith, "but for letters addressed here, we have to send over to the village."

"I almost expect a letter from Violet," said Elsie, "so if anybody is going near the village to-day they might ask for it."

"We will see about it," said Keith. "Eh, Tom? We shall want to try the 'Waterwitch' some time to day, and that expedition will do as well as another."

"Well, what is to be the programme to day?" asked Mr. Keith.

"Elsie and I are going to be busy till lunch," said Pauline.

"What do you say to a quiet morning's fishing, Archie?" said Mr. Carmichael. "I feel quite lazy. There must be something the matter with this climate of yours."

"Oh, everybody is supposed to be lazy here," was the answer. "You can give us a boat, Keith, I suppose? What are you and Tom going to do with yourselves?"

"We have settled to rig the 'Waterwitch' first thing, and we have plenty to do after that."

"You see, my daddy," said Elsie, "what good

young persons we all are. You and Uncle Harry are the only idle people to-day."

"Perhaps we have earned our idleness, Miss Mischief," said Uncle Harry.

"Well, what about Violet, Elsie?" said Mr. Keith. "Are you going to have her down?"

"Yes, I got her to promise to come, when I saw her on Wednesday, and I fancy she will come soon, in case the Crawfurds might be coming down. She does not want to meet Mrs. Crawfurd."

"But," said Pauline, "Mrs. Crawfurd invited us to a place that you said was a long way from here."

"Yes, she said they were going to Inellan," said Elsie, "but she is likely enough to come here for all that. She always is going to go somewhere else, but she always comes here in the end."

"The Crawfurds are coming here," said Tom. "I saw Hugh yesterday, and he told me they were coming very soon."

As they left the breakfast-table, Mr. Keith took his nephew aside.

"I am inclined to think," he said, "that if we could keep Violet here for some little time,

we might perhaps be able to do something with Hugh's father to get this affair put right. If James Crawfurd once knew of this, he would compel Hugh to acknowledge the marriage."

"But," said Keith, "you would not tell him without Hugh's consent, would you?"

"No, certainly not. We have no right to do that. But we might make it easier for Hugh to tell him."

"I don't know whether we can do any good," said Keith, "but we might try. I cannot see how Hugh is to come out of the affair blameless, and he has a great horror of exposure. I fancy he will keep the secret as long as he can."

"But surely he cannot expect to keep such a secret for ever?"

"I suspect Hugh has somehow or other humbugged the marriage itself," said Keith, "and he won't care to face the consequences of that."

"I know what you mean," said Mr. Keith, "but that is a mere informality which we might get Hugh to put right before he speaks to his father on the subject."

"Yes, but Violet would have to know about it. And for her to know that the marriage was

open to the slightest suspicion would be a very serious matter indeed."

"I quite agree with you," said Mr. Keith. "But perhaps we may be able to think of some way out of the difficulty. Meanwhile I will leave you to suggest to Elsie the advisability of keeping Violet here as long as she can."

The "Waterwitch" was a handsome, fine-lined, lugger-built boat, which had been laid up for the winter in a shed at the back of the house. Keith and Tom, with Duncan's assistance got her down to the beach on rollers, and towed her out to her moorings. The rigging of the pretty little craft took up the morning till bathing-time. Coming back after their swim, the young men got talking about Violet's affairs *à propos* of making arrangements to go for her letter.

"What do you think about this marriage, Keith?" said Tom.

"Hm! Can't say I believe in it altogether," was Keith's answer. It may be all right, but I'll be hanged if I think so."

"Madame Violet evidently thinks it is all right."

"Of course she does, she wouldn't be likely to know otherwise. Why, a doubt of it would drive

her mad. My uncle wants to get the matter put right, but it won't be easily done. One thing is certain—Mrs. Violet must know nothing about it."

"Not if she knows it is putting her right?" asked Tom.

"No. She must never know there has been anything wrong," said Keith. "I can't say I like the lookout for her in any case. One would think she must find the fellow out some time, whatever happens, and that will break her heart. I should say she will go mad, at the least. It does all seem so cursedly wrong," he went on bitterly. "Here is a good woman's life practically wrecked because she has married the man she loves. I believe the beggar meant well enough at first, till he spoilt everything with his damned cowardice. I believe he is more afraid of what he considers the shame of being known to be married, than he is of the row with his mother. And that is saying something."

"It's a damned shame altogether," said Tom. "What makes women so queer, I wonder? There was more than one good fellow would have been glad to have married Violet Danby in open day; and yet she must choose the greatest

humbug she could get. But, my word," he broke off suddenly, "won't there be a saintly row when the little game comes to light! Won't Mother Crawfurd be in a nice way!"

"A 'saintly row,' as you call it, Tom, is just what we must steer clear of, though I don't exactly see how we are going to do so. The thing can't be kept secret for ever."

"Hugh will do his best," said Tom. "He's supposed now to be very much struck with Pauline."

"No doubt," said Keith drily. "Come to that, it is not so long since he proposed for Elsie."

"For Elsie?" exclaimed Tom. "Why, Elsie knows about his marriage!"

"Yes. But Hugh wasn't to know that."

"He was an ass, then, to think that Violet would be married and not let Elsie know about it before long."

"He was a greater ass," said Keith, "not to recognise his good luck in getting Violet at all."

"What do you think Mrs. Crawfurd would do if she knew about this business?"

"Well, to do her justice," said Keith, "I believe that, first of all, she would acknowledge

Violet as her daughter-in-law. She might, likely enough, take it out of Hugh afterwards; but she would do that first."

"I suppose Hugh means to acknowledge Violet some day?"

"Very likely," said Keith, "some day—but not till it suits his convenience; and, considering the position of affairs, that won't be soon. Meanwhile he may take some new fancy."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Tom. "It rather strikes me, do you know, that Mrs. Crawfurd means him to marry Pauline. That is why they have come here, you may—Hallo! here come the fishermen! Wonder what sort of luck they have had."

Half-an-hour afterwards, Keith was far out on the loch, waiting in the "tub" for the advent of the steamer, and watching the "Waterwitch" beating up to the pier with white sails gleaming in the morning sunshine.

"Well, Captain," shouted Keith, as his boat came up to the platform, "have you got anything for me?"

"Ay, Doctor." The Captain leant over the platform and spoke in a stentorian whisper, which he fondly imagined was nearly inaudible,

the more especially as he had an idea that language "unillumined by profanity" constituted a sort of whisper in itself. "Ay, Doctor, I hae gotten a grand young leddy for ye—just as bonnie as the ane ye brocht yestreen. Man, ye'll be getting marriet wi' a' they bonnie lassies aboot. It's no' canny."

"Well, you see, Captain," said Keith, joining in the laugh which the Captain's sally had provoked, "I don't go in for such vanities. It's all for Tom Challoner's sake, you know."

"Ay, man?" retorted the incredulous mariner. "But I'm thinking ye'll aye be takin' yer wale o' them, for a' that.—But here's the leddy."

And Keith found himself talking to Violet, while one of the sailors was arranging various packages in the bow of his boat. Then he handed her down the swaying ladder, and she stepped easily and daintily on to the gunwale of the boat and along to her place in the sternsheets.

"You have been in a boat before?" said Keith, smiling.

"Oh yes," she said. "But what a pretty boat it is!" (And in truth the "tub" was a pretty boat in spite of its name.) "And will you run up the sail and let me steer?"

The "tub" was soon cutting her way through the glancing ripples, and Keith was not so engrossed with his management of the sail but that he had leisure for observing Violet, who looked very handsome in her dress of close-fitting blue serge, while a soft grey wrap she wore brought out the sweet peach-blossom tones of her complexion. And her face was full of a tender joyousness that to Keith, in the light of what he knew, was inexpressibly touching.

"What a strangely-beautiful place, Mr. Keith," she said as she looked round while Keith was raising the sail. She spoke softly, even for her, as though afraid to break the great silence that seemed to fill "the limit of the circling hills."

When they got fairly under way, she spoke again:—

"By-the-by, Mr. Keith, did Elsie get my letter?"

"No," he said, "she has just gone across to the village to see about it, with Pauline and Uncle Harry and Tom Challoner, to give her their valuable assistance. Do you see that boat with the two white sails, just beating in to the pier?"

"Yes, but surely:—why it's a lugger—we have those sort of boats on our coast—I did not

know you had them here. Is that the 'Waterwitch' there?"

"Yes, that is the 'Waterwitch.'"

"She goes well," said Violet, shading her eyes with her disengaged hand, the better to observe the craft's performance. Then she came back to the subject in hand:—

"But Elsie did not expect me to-day then? Are you sure, Mr. Keith, I shall not be in the way? Your uncle—"

"My uncle!" interposed Keith, "my uncle has been scheming to keep you here ever so long."

"That is very kind of him," said Violet, "but I cannot stay very long, I am going home to my mother for a time. In fact, Hugh thinks I am off to Yorkshire to-day—I was not able to tell him about coming here. He is coming to Yorkshire for a few days before I come back; and, as he doesn't know exactly when he can come, I must make sure of my visit while I can get it."

"That reminds me," said Keith, "I have not seen you since you were married. I suppose I ought to congratulate you?"

"Certainly," she answered, with a pretty, shy smile. "No girl ever had such fortune. Hugh

has been so good to me. I cannot tell you how good he has been."

Keith had his own opinion of Hugh's goodness. He felt almost a hypocrite himself in tacitly assenting thereto; and it would be hard to say whether contempt for Hugh's folly, or indignation against his callous heartlessness, had the greater share in the curious emotion produced by Violet's simple words. Henceforward Violet had no more devoted ally than Keith Dunbar

Mr. Keith was waiting on the beach when they came ashore, and he greeted Violet with a cordiality that made her feel at home at once, finishing up with a scolding for distrusting her friends because Mrs. Crawfurd had used her badly.

"You should have come to us," he said, "and if we could have found you, my dear, you would have had no choice." Then he turned to his nephew :—

"And now, Keith, what about Pauline's painting—can you spare her an end of your laboratory, as you did Mr. Ross? It is the best room about the place for a good light." A proposal to which Keith was by no means reluctant to give his consent.

The laboratory was at the back of the house, a spacious room with a stone floor, originally intended as a laundry. It was lighted principally from the roof, and its two windows looked to the north, on a very restricted clearing in the wood. Benches and shelves laden with Keith's apparatus, with a writing-table in the middle of the room, were sufficiently indicative of its purpose. A door opposite one of the windows opened on the lawn (the laboratory stood at right-angles to the west side of the house), and a door at the end opened into a passage communicating with the kitchen. To this room Duncan and Keith brought up the packages just arrived from the steamer: item, a large heavy easel, for indoor work; item, an outdoor folding-easel with a seat; item, a large case of oil-colour tubes; item, a pocket edition of the same; item, a case of water-colours; item, a package of whatman pads, sketchbooks, millboards and canvases; item, a case of brushes. Mr. Keith himself superintended the disposal of these materials. He placed the easel in the best light.

"Now, Keith," he said, "a table here to put the gear on—and a screen wouldn't come amiss,

there's a draught—now a canvas on the easel here—put the large case on the table—now, I think, we should have a rug here; send to Kirsty for something—have you a spare cupboard to stack those canvases in?—now take these portabilities and tell Kirsty to put them in Miss Carmichael's room. Then, I think, we are ready. You will have to mind what you are doing, Keith. You mustn't have any explosions or escaping gases while Pauline is working here."

"Oh, that will be all right," said Keith. "I shall work at night."

"Did you mean all those beautiful things that I found in my room for me?" Pauline asked Keith as they met in the dining-room at lunch.

"Certainly," said Keith, "they are some of the things my uncle was speaking about this morning."

Here Keith's attention was distracted. Tom Challoner was addressing the meeting, although his remarks were apparently offered to Elsie.

"I shall not forget," said this nice young gentleman, "to give Mrs. Crawfurd an account of this morning's proceedings. To think we all

should be sent off on a wildgoose-chase across the loch, while the real Simon Pure, the irreproachable Keith forsooth, knows all about Violet's coming, and meets her quietly while we are out of the way. Why, the old lady will be ready to hug me for very gratitude."

"Hm," said Keith, blandly, "I would rather Mrs. Crawfurd exhibited her gratitude to you than to me," thereby turning the laugh against Tom, whose further retort was stopped by the entrance of Violet. Mr. Keith turned the conversation.

"Uncle Harry and I are thinking of driving up to the head of the loch this afternoon. Do you young people think you could take care of yourselves?"

"I will look after them, Mr. Keith," said Violet.

"Aren't you young people, then?" Tom asked.

"I? I am an old married woman," said Violet, with as much dignity as she could manage to assume.

"Dear me!" said Keith, "one would think nobody had ever been married before."

"Nivir thoo' min', hinny, he's nobbut learkin',"

said Tom, by way of consolation, addressing Violet in what he supposed to be her native tongue.

"Ay, lad," she replied, "happen t' barn knaws nae better."

"When I was a youngster," said Keith, meditatively, "I used to wonder what the confusion of tongues was like."

"Well?" said Violet, waiting for him to go on.

"Oh, nothing—only your conversation with Tom throws a light upon the subject," whereat they had another laugh.

"But the real question is, my daddy," said Elsie, "who is to look after you and Uncle Harry?"

"Perhaps," said Tom, "I had better take charge of them?"

"I wish you would," answered Elsie, "and," but she gave him the rest of her instructions in a whisper, "don't let them come back very soon. I want a long talk with Violet."

Accordingly, after the elders had been driven off by Tom, Keith made Violet and Elsie comfortable in the verandah, and then took Pauline away to show her the painting-room. The cool

shady room was very pleasant, and Pauline enjoyed herself greatly turning over the shining tubes and fresh pads and canvases.

"Well, it is good of you," she said, as she stood before the large easel and surveyed her property. Will you not let me do something to show my gratitude?"

"Will you paint me a little picture, then?" said Keith.

"What would you like it to be?"

"To be? What would you say to the view we were looking at yesterday afternoon?"

"Ah me!" she said, "I don't know if I can manage that, but I will try. I owe you so much at least."

"You owe me nothing. I will take the picture only as your gift."

"Well, I must make a sketch for it," said Pauline. "When shall we go? They won't want us on the verandah. They want to talk."

"Yes, they want a long talk, and perhaps a good cry. Poor Violet!" he went on, with a sudden bitterness, "she has more reason to cry than she knows of."

"Why should she have reason to cry?" Pauline asked. But Keith shook his head:—

"Ah! that I cannot tell you—it is not my secret; and, besides, you might find the knowledge embarrassing."

"Do you think I could not keep a secret then?" she asked.

"Yes, I am sure you could; but, believe me, you are better without this one."

"Well, you know best; but if she is in trouble I should like to help her. I don't want to know the secret unless I can be of some use."

"You can be of great use. Every kindness you can show is of use, or will be some day. It is all so sad to see her so beautiful and happy, and to know that her happy life is overshadowed by madness or death."

"Madness!—Death!—Why?"

"Because she is a good woman, that is why."

"But are you sure? Is there no chance for her?"

"I will not say there is no chance, but the chance depends upon someone else. My uncle thinks the danger may be avoided, but I fear he is somewhat sanguine."

"Has the chance to do with her husband, then?" asked Pauline.

"Yes, I am afraid it has."

"You know him, then?"

"Yes, I know him, after a fashion—I know about him, at anyrate. Well," Keith went on, "you cannot say I have not trusted you. I am only afraid I have pained you needlessly by telling you my fears."

"No. I thank you for telling me," she said gravely, but her sweet eyes were full of tears.

"Well, then," said Keith, "what will you take with you to work with? I have thought of a place in the wood where you will get the view we want."

The view from the wood was even more beautiful than the view from the verandah. There were the shadowy hills and gleaming waters—the same sapphire sky, with its white sailing clouds; but the picture was set in a frame of softly-lighted grass and dark mossy pine-trunks and deep-leaved boughs.

"Oh," said Pauline, "this is more beautiful than ever!"

Keith spread a rug for her and then arranged her easel. Then he lay down on the grass and smoked. And as he smoked, he watched for the passing of the Grail.

All the pleasant afternoon they spent thus. At last Pauline laid down her brush.

"There," she said, "if I do any more to day I shall spoil it."

So they gathered up their traps and went off to the house. As they came on the terrace they heard Violet singing. It was a queer, wild, high-pitched melody; and the words they heard were these:—

"Till I shall be sleeping
In the cold dark grave,
God my soul is keeping
Who is strong to save."

Pauline shivered.

"Poor Violet!" she said to Keith. "It is like a corroboration of your fears. But what a lovely voice she has! Does she sing much?"

"Elsie says she is always singing. But we will get her to sing to you to night."

Tom Challoner came back by himself; the elders had stayed to dinner with Sir Peter Fergus, a city magnate, who owned the castle at the head of the loch. So the young folks were left to their own devices.

After dinner they all sat out on the verandah to see the moon rise. As the night gathered, their talk grew grave and at last lapsed into

silence. Before them stretched the glimmering waters, and the darkening hills rose against the faint radiance that showed the coming moon.

"Sing, Violet, dear," whispered Elsie, "sing that song of David Raeburn's," and Violet sang:—

"In the sad winter time.
'Mid its wild storm and rime,
Night comes at noon."

A clear bird-like voice, carolling a dreamy pathetic waltz-measure:—

"In the sweet days of June,
'Mid all the summer noon,
Night comes at last.
Tho' few the darkling hours,
Tho' bright the gladsome flowers:—
Night comes at last.
Ah! in the autumn days
Life walks in golden ways,
But night comes soon.
Fruits stored in garner fair,
Dead leaves in wintry air,
Show night so soon.

* * * * *

Yet, tho' the day be brief,
Less room for care or grief:—
Be the day gone.
Work for the hours of light,
Rest in the kindly night,
Till the day dawn
After the darksome night,
Cometh the morning light,
Day breaks at last:
Ne'er to be clouded o'er
Ever on that bright shore
Dark night is past."

Then there was silence again, and Keith found that Pauline's eyes were full of tears, and her hand was clasped in his.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE SUNSET.

"It is always conceivable that if we had been greater, circumstances would have been less strong against us."

George Eliot.

ON that same Friday evening, just as it began to fall dusk, Hugh Crawfurd stood on the steps of his father's house in Blythswood Square, apparently undecided as to his route.

"I think," he said to himself, as he drew on his gloves, "I will just go and see if Violet has gone. She will be nicely out of the way at Scarsdale, and that will save a lot of bother for the present. If she hasn't gone, I must get her to go at once."

Hugh worked his gloves on and fastened them very carefully, pulled down his cuffs and felt at his tie, flicked a speck of dust off his sleeve, and finally walked leisurely away. He soon arrived at the little cross-street, and, ascending the long stone "stair," let himself into Violet's house with his latchkey. He went

into the little kitchen. No one was there. "Violet," he called, but there was no answer. He looked into the sitting-room—it was empty; then into the bedroom—that was empty too. He went back to the kitchen—there was no fire in the grate, but everything was so fresh and bright that it was evident the house had not been long left to itself.

"She must have gone," Hugh said to himself. "It is just as well. She will be better out of the way before this Loch Dhuil business comes on. She would have expected me to come here ever so much more than might be convenient, especially since my mother has taken up the notion of marrying me to Pauline. Pauline—Pauline!" he called out bitterly. "Good God! what a fool I have been—what a frightful fool! And yet—and yet, what is to hinder the marriage if I choose? None of them can prove this other marriage. Put it right, Mr. Keith? All very fine, and let that supercilious nephew of yours walk off with Pauline and her fortune? Very likely! I owe you a score, Mr. Keith Dunbar. If I had not been afraid of you, I need not have been in such a hurry to marry Violet. Marry! —did I say 'marry'? Well, we'll say 'marry.'

Perhaps, at anyrate, I may be able to spoil your game a second time."

Hugh walked impatiently up and down the kitchen; then he crossed the passage into the sitting-room, and stood at the window, looking out at the sunset. A great wilderness of roofs stretched away to the west and lost itself in a violet-grey mist. Above the mist, the edge of the low-burning sun's disc peered into the luminous amber of a cloudless sky, which deepened overhead into a clear grey-green where the stars began to come. Against the sunset the spires of the churches stood up in violet darkness, and one great clock-tower dominated all the picture.

Hugh looked at the sunset, without noticing much about it at the time. He was thinking of his difficulties; and his difficulties, like the difficulties of a good many people, were very much of his own making—at least, they were traceable to himself—though whether a man can be held responsible for himself, is a question the present writer leaves for the consideration of some gifted reader with a taste for arguing in a circle. Hugh, then, was beginning to feel his position irksome. Whether this would have

happened if he had never seen Pauline is another question we need not discuss. In love matters, no one but a fool professes to be guided by the *reinen Vernunft*. That one ought to love a given woman is seldom a reason for doing so ; while on the other hand prohibition seems often enough the very *raison d'être* of a lifelong attachment. Where Hugh was found wanting was that, loving Violet well enough to marry her, he was yet so wrapped up in himself and had so little thought for her as to put her in the false position of a hidden wife. It was in consequence of this that, in spite of her tender and thoughtful love, he was so easily led away from her by the next pretty face he saw. If he had lived with her altogether, the fact of the marriage being known would have rendered him unlikely to think of other women as a single man does—that is, as possible wives, and Violet's beautiful womanhood could not but have influenced his impressionable nature for good. Here Little Zion had had an evil influence on him, with its low standard of human nature and its prurient treatment of love. So that his love for Violet, which if he had given it fair play would have elevated and ennobled him, only tended to debase him. A course of

open profligacy would hardly have been worse for this young man than his secret marriage. There might have been some chance of his arriving at the prodigal's repentance, if he had followed the prodigal's course. But as it was, according to his way of thinking, there was nothing to repent of, and everything to be ashamed of. It did not occur to him to stand on his rights as a man to do the thing he chose, and to set Little Zion and its opinions at defiance. On the other hand, he had not the moral strength to keep the law in which he had been brought up. On this matter of love, too, he had the mawkish sensitiveness which does duty in Little Zion for purity. This, more than any dread of his parents, caused the secrecy of his relations with Violet, and this hindered the good she might have done him. It is needless to say that Hugh had no appreciation of his wife's character. Womanliness, pure and simple, was just what, with his training, he could not understand; and self-sacrifice for the woman he loved he understood still less. Living this double life—married to Violet, yet appearing to the world as a single young man in his father's house—the deception necessarily reacted on his nature, and that was with the more effect because

he had drifted into it from cowardice and had not adopted it of deliberate purpose for the sake of the woman he loved. So that it is little wonder that, as Hugh stood there looking out into the sunset and thinking of his difficulties, those difficulties should look heavy enough.

With a waning love, it was not surprising that the little sacrifices of money or convenience Hugh had to make for Violet's sake should have become irksome. And if they were irksome in the present, what about the future? He thought of Violet with a child; but the thought to his prurient sensitiveness was horrible. Just as he was wanting in true manhood, so he was wanting in fatherhood. To be known to have been married in this way was bad enough, but with a child in the case the matter would be much worse. Hugh's avowal of his marriage at first would have been an easy task to what it was now; and as he thought of it all, he grew very bitter; and his bitterness was caused less by any fancy he had for Pauline, than by the pressure of his own difficulties.

Poor Hugh! To think what he was putting away from him:— manhood, husbandhood, fatherhood, the love of a true noble woman,

the happiness of the home life she could have given him:—and for what? For the greater luxury of his father's house:—for the "freedom," forsooth, of his bachelor-life:—for the sake of his reputation in Little Zion—though Little Zion would have bade him cherish his wife. One reason why Hugh was ready to love Pauline rather than his wife was that Violet had a claim upon him; and a claim which to a loyal soul is a bond of peace, is to a lesser nature an irksome restraint. Hugh thought of himself—not of Violet. That was reason enough for the bitterness of his thoughts.

"And yet—what can I do?" he said to himself, as he took to pacing backwards and forwards again. "Put it as I like, the knowledge of this would be a barrier to anything else. Even if Pauline does not know, her father does. With Violet always at Scarsdale, still I am not free: I could only be free if she were——"

He stopped suddenly and covered his face with his hands:—

"Good God!" he muttered, in a low tone of horror, "am I a villain?"

Then he looked out at the sunset again, and the words of one of Violet's songs came into his

mind, and he seemed to hear their dreamy wailing.

"Night comes so soon.—Night comes so soon."

Then the tune changed to a high clear melody and other words came into possession :—

"Till I shall be sleeping
In the cold dark grave"

He could bear it no longer! he turned and fled from the house, but he could not escape the words. The echoes of his feet, as he descended the long stair, chimed in with them. He took a cab, and the rumble of its wheels sang them again. He got out to walk, and every passing footstep rhymed to them in the quiet night. Finding himself down town, he made his way to the theatre and went in. He had never been in a theatre before, but he got himself to a seat. There was a great silence, broken only by soft preluding from the orchestra—on the stage he could just make out a prostrate form with another dark form by it, and a high clear voice like an echo of his wife's song rose into the silence:

"Ah! I have sighed to rest me
Deep in the quiet grave."

This was enough for Hugh. He went out again

and, taking refuge in a neighbouring restaurant, ordered supper. But he could not stay there all night, so he went home in a cab, and this time was free from the haunting voice. But not for long. He woke in the night with the words ringing in his ears. He had a horrible dream:—he stood beside a coffin, and the corpse inside gibbered them softly to itself—then it sprang up and shrieked them into his ears. At last he got to sleep again, and the morning light brought surcease to the evil visions. In due time Hugh appeared at the breakfast-table, calm and collected as usual, and received his mother's final instructions with regard to the "summer campaign."

Hugh was to escort his mother to the station, on her departure for Loch Dhuil, and, his father having gone to the office, he was left to receive the instructions aforesaid.

"And now, Hugh," said Mrs. Crawfurd, in a sort of last-will-and-testament fashion, when breakfast was quite over and she had nothing to do but put on her bonnet before she went. "And now, Hugh, I want to speak to you seriously. I shall expect you to pay proper attention to Pauline Carmichael. Just get Violet

Danby out of your head once for all, and don't let this girl slip through your fingers as you did Elsie Keith:—I never thought you would have shilly-shallied as you did about her. You need not go down to Rosebank to-night:—that would look too special. But we'll see them at church to-morrow, and I will arrange something for Monday. I have got your father to allow you to stay down a few days, and, while we are at Glenfinlas, you must come down as much as you can:—you must give up your knocking about town for this year. There are not many young men get such a chance. You could not get a prettier girl, which is what you young men are led away with; and then her fortune is a good one. You could live in the West End somewhere if you married her, between your money and hers; and you would start in life with a much better chance than you father and I had. I must say," she continued, "I should not think much of your chance if Keith was not already married. I have no doubt he sees by this time what a fool he has been. I think, too, I will see what I can do with his uncle towards having his marriage recognised. It really cannot be good for husband and wife to be living apart like that.

If Elspeth or Keith will give me her address, I think I will have Violet down for a few days. It will be a good way of softening Archibald Keith, and nothing could be better, as regards Pauline, than to let her see Keith and Violet together."

Naturally Hugh objected to this arrangement, but he knew it was useless to oppose his mother, as opposition but made that lady more determined. Besides, he thought, Violet was safe in Yorkshire.

"Very well, mother," he said, "you must do as you please, but I doubt if you will get Keith to go your road, or anybody's road but his own. He will be pretty sure to keep Violet out of the way."

Hugh was very busy all day, but four o'clock found him seated in the Greenock train. He read his evening paper, and then sat leaning back against the cushions, thinking of Pauline, when all at once he found that the jolting of the train was running into the words and tune he had fled from the night before:—

> "Till I shall be sleeping
> In the cold dark grave."

He sat up and looked out of the window, tried to read his paper again, but it was of no use.

The tune had taken possession of him again and sang itself in his head, over and over and over again. At Greenock he left the train and went aboard the steamer, and the tune adapted itself to the throbbing of the paddles as he stood on the bridge. He went to the stern only to catch it again in the wash of the waves. He tried talking, but with every pause in the conversation it came back. When he left the steamer it went with him as he walked up the pier. In the evening he went out and sat on a rock by the shore, and it seemed to him that the wind among the trees and the waves lapping on the shore had but one voice — the voice of this haunting refrain.

CHAPTER X.

UNDER THE NIGHT.

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more."

Lovelace.

IT was late on Saturday night and Keith was busy in his laboratory. He had been making preparations—with Tom's assistance, of course—for getting to work during the next week. He could have been done sooner, but Pauline had been painting in the room the greater part of the day, and he had not wished to disturb her. The work was done now, however. Tom was standing by Pauline's easel waiting for Keith, who was seated at his writing-table, thoughtfully turning over his manuscripts. At last Keith rose and went to a cabinet at one side of the room, and came back with a small blue glass bottle in his hand.

"I shall be done directly, old fellow," he said as he resumed his seat; while Tom, noticing the bottle, was seized with a brilliant idea.

"I say Keith, have you another bottle like that anywhere about?"

"Yes, I daresay—look in the end drawer. What's up now?"

"Only a little game, old man."

"All right," and Keith relapsed into his manuscripts.

Tom got his bottle, and took himself off to the kitchen.

"Mary," said he, to one of the maids, "just go and get me some scent from one of the young ladies' rooms. You needn't wait to find out the nicest, though I daresay you know all about them," he added, laughing. Mary brought him a flask, from which he filled his bottle.

"You needn't say anything about it, you know, Mary," was his parting injunction.

"Vera weel, sir," said Mary, laughing. She was quite accustomed to keep Tom's secrets.

Tom's next performance was to invent a formula for his compound—a travesty of the one Keith had just written for his bottle. Certainly his invention did him credit, though a chemist who seriously attempted to understand it would probably have been reduced to imbecility in the effort. It is not usual to express atomic weights

by means of the trigonometrical ratios wherewith Tom indicated the exceedingly complicated nature of his composition. Then he got a big "poison" label, and affixed it duly.

By this time Keith had put his work away and was watching Tom's proceedings with a good deal of amusement.

"What do you think of my discovery?" said Tom, handing him the bottle. "It strikes me as an improvement on yours:—not so dangerous, for one thing:—and then the formula is quite out of the common."

"Certainly, the formula is very much out of the common," and Keith smiled at its perverted ingenuity.

"You can smell it," said Tom, "and it would hardly be healthy to do that with yours."

"It doesn't smell badly," said Keith. Then he went to the cabinet again and poured a few drops of a clear essence into the bottle. "Try that," he said, giving it back to Tom. "But what is the little game—if it is a fair question?"

"That's very fine," said Tom, putting down the bottle, "and the little game? You remember Uncle Harry's joke about the medicated coral?'

"Yes."

"Well, I am going to hoax Uncle Harry and the rest of them with this. They won't know but what it is that compound you are working with, you see."

"That is it, is it? Well, I daresay you may get a rise out of them with it. But you must keep your bottle out of the way of mine, for fear of accidents."

"All right," said Tom, "you keep yours on the table there, in sight, and I will manage to draw attention to it one of these days. And I will put mine over here, out of the way."

"Very well, only be careful — accidents happen so easily."

> "Alas! how easily things go wrong:—
> A drop too much, or a sniff too long—
> And there follows a mist and a weeping rain
> And a life is never the same again."

Sang Tom, improvising a tune for the occasion. "Heighho! let us go outside and have a smoke."

"I suppose the Crawfurds will be turning up next week," said Tom after a while. He had his reasons. "Do you think Dame Violet will want to run away?"

"I fancy she will, unless my uncle manages to persuade her to stay."

"I suppose he thinks that, if she stays here,

with Hugh knocking about, something must turn up to bring about an explanation?"

"No," said Keith, "I think he imagines he can persuade Hugh to do what is right, with the help of Violet's influence, and old Crawfurd's liking for her. My uncle has a good deal of influence with Mrs. Crawfurd too, and so has Uncle Harry:—he counts somewhat on that. In fact, if the old woman could once be made to see that the game was up as regards Pauline, I don't think there would be any more trouble with her."

And so Keith walked into Tom's snare. They had got down to the beach by this time. The moon had not yet risen, and the night was dark and still. Vaguely the shadowy hills loomed over the shadowy waters under the clear stars. Tiny ripples flashed in fitful phosphorescent light as they broke on the beach. The young men could not see each others' faces, and the darkness encouraged Tom to say what he could not have ventured to hint at in the light.

"Keith, old man," he said—knocking the ash off the end of his cigar and speaking with an amount of hesitation very unusual for him—"why shouldn't you solve the difficulty then?"

"As how?" said Keith, stolidly looking straight before him.

"Why shouldn't you marry Pauline? She loves you, and you love her. And Uncle Harry has taken a fancy to you as well."

Keith's cigar wanted attention now. He flicked off the ash very carefully; then replaced it between his lips; then, after a few puffs, took it out again:—

"Don't tempt me, old lad. God knows I love her—but what have I to do with marriage? And then she is rich—if it were not for that wretched money, though—"

"She is no richer than you will be if this thing of yours turns out properly."

"Yes, if—and ten years after this, at that. Besides, I cannot tie myself to go in for money-making. I cannot sell myself even for Pauline. Pauline, Pauline," he added softly, "God bless you! And then, besides," he continued after a pause, "she is our guest, and I have no right to abuse my privileges. And she has had no chance of seeing other fellows yet. I could never forgive myself if I fancied I had taken a mean advantage of her."

"You may take my word for it," said Tom,

"she doesn't want to see any more young fellows. There is only one young fellow for her, and his name is Keith Dunbar. Your sending for those painting things fetched her. I saw it in her eyes. But, for matter of that, she was pretty well fetched before we left town. You're a nice young man," Tom went on remorselessly, "winning the affections of innocent maidens and then blighting them for a whim."

"Don't, dear lad," said Keith, in a pained voice, as he turned to Tom and laid his hand on his shoulder. "To tell you the truth, I fancy Pauline thinks I am married to Violet after all, or in love with her at least; and I can't tell her about it, and I cannot but be kind to poor Violet either. Hugh's secret affects others almost as much as himself. If she once knew it, things might perhaps be different. But I can't tell her of it, and I can't let you tell her. I put you upon honour, mind."

"Well, I only know this," said Tom, "that, if you could bring yourself to ask her, she would say 'yes,' and everybody would be pleased, Uncle Harry especially. Though I must say I don't think Pauline has thought about it herself."

"That is a very good reason for leaving her

alone, Tom. Dear love, she shall have her girlhood while she can, for me."

And Tom, having said what he wanted, allowed the conversation to drop, and by-and-by, when the moon rose, they went off for a walk round the bay. When they got back to the house everybody had gone to bed. As they separated in the passage, instead of simply singing out a careless "good-night," they shook hands:—

"Honour bright, old man!" said Keith, warningley.

"Honour bright!" said Tom.

CHAPTER XI.

SABBATH MORNING.

"If good, why do I yield to that suggestion,
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature?"

Macbeth.

VERY peacefully and beautifully the Sabbath morning rose over Loch Dhuil. Peacefully the still waters slept in the sunshine, or mirrored the mighty mountains in the shade. Softly the white clouds hung in the blue heaven. Softly their shadows lay on the hillsides, or flecked the grass beneath the trees. No breath of air stirred leaf or blade, no faintest ripple broke the liquid mirror of the lake. No bird sang in the drowsy stillness. Only from over sea came the drowsy susurrus of waterfalls that "clung like a dripping smoke" to far-off cliffs. All breathed of peace—the peace of "green pastures" and "still waters"—the rest and strength of "the everlasting hills."

The two uncles were walking on the terrace,

leisurely pacing it from end to end in the tranquillity of spirit begotten of the matutinal cigar.

"Truly, Archie," said Carmichael as he looked round at the low pretty house with its terraced lawns stretching back to the woods and down to the beach—"truly, to use the old words, the 'lines have fallen to you in pleasant places.'"

"Yes, Harry," said the other, "my life has been full. I have had little to complain of. I have often thought it strange that, with the loss of my greatest blessing, my life seems to have grown even fuller than before."

"Well, I think I can understand that:—just as blind folk develop such a fine sense of touch, but—but, I suppose they would rather see?"

"Yes, they would rather see," said Mr. Keith gently.

"These youngsters of yours must be a great comfort to you, too."—They were standing at the end of the terrace, and while Mr. Carmichael was speaking the young folks came up from the beach in a body, all laughing and talking together. They crossed the terrace and went up the lawn by the side of the house to the laboratory. —"Elsie is a good lass, and your nephew Keith is as fine a young fellow as I have met."

"My bonnie lass, she is good," said Mr. Keith, fondly. "But look here, Harry. Talking of Keith, do you see these two?" Keith and Pauline were standing at the laboratory-door. She had laid her hand on his arm, and was looking up into his face, talking very earnestly.

"Well?" said Mr. Carmichael.

"'Well? Don't you see what that is coming to? Take my word for it, those two are being drawn to one another. Shall I tell Keith he had better get off to Vienna at once?"

"Oh, yes, I see." Mr. Carmichael spoke with great apparent gravity. "I have seen it for some time, but it never occurred to me that you would have any objections to my daughter?"

"Objections! Man Harry, I love her as my own."

"Well, then, we'll just leave them to their own devices. My lassie could not be in better hands—Keith is a good fellow, and I believe he would value her and make her happy; he has brains, too, and energy, and, to my mind, they count for more than wealth. I am not altogether a believer in the theory of wealth marrying wealth: it savours somewhat of the marriage of near kin."

In the laboratory Tom was giving Violet a lecture *à propos* of Pauline's picture, which as representing only one day's work was sufficiently chaotic to give colour to his absurdity.

"This, madam," said he, carefully turning the canvas upside down, "is a view in the mountains of the moon. You will observe that the landscape is destitute of the charms of water, that element having been abolished by an act of parliament which came into operation after the last flood. It had been intended that the measure should come into force before the flood, but owing to the opposition of the Conservatives its action had to be postponed to the date we have mentioned. Meanwhile—and it is a beautiful illustration of the principle of government by majorities—the flood came, and drowned the greater part of the population, all, in fact, except the original man in the moon, who kept an ark handy for such catastrophes. Here is the ark. The figure in the middle distance is the gentleman in question. He is alone, you see—the lunar Adam not having attained to the development of ribs; a malign providence had not been able to produce an Eve to get him into trouble with the constituted authorities——"

"Tom," said Elsie, coming up to the easel, "do you know it is Sunday?"

"Yes ma'am," said Tom, "I know. I am talking a mixture of theology and science-made-easy, with a view to improving this lady's mind."

"I am afraid Tom's science is much on a par with his theology," said Keith, as he and Pauline joined the group.

"Let us have the science in earnest, then," said the incorrigible Tom, taking up Keith's blue glass bottle from the writing-table. "This is Keith's latest atrocity; the very smell of it is a passport to Kingdom-come. It is the same delightful compound he meant trying on you, Miss Pauline, that night he fished you up out of the street. I almost fear that even the medicated coral might not have availed to save you from this stuff. In fact, I quite believe I saved your life by appearing when I did. You owe me a debt of gratitude." The remainder of Tom's speech was addressed to Violet. "You see, madam, it becomes important that this should be tried on somebody. I am going to try it myself some of these days, but I don't expect any great result, as, like Miss Pauline, I am

supposed to be poison-proof. Elsie is so dead to all scientific enthusiasm that she will not allow herself to be experimented upon. Now, it has occurred to me," Tom went on with admirable gravity, "that you might be inclined to offer yourself for the experiment. Of course, it would kill you. But then think what an interesting case you would make. Your name would be known over all Europe as the first victim of Iodo-bromo-sulphuro-phospho-tetrahedra-ethylmethyl-aldehyde of anything you like." And Tom prepared to extract the stopper. "And we might call it after you—don't you think so, Keith? 'Violaniline' would sound very well."

"Thank you kindly, sir," said Violet, curtseying, "but I am not ambitious."

"Hullo, Keith! look here," said Tom, suddenly changing his bantering gravity for earnest. "This sealing is loose; suppose somebody should get smelling it?"

"It is all right, though," Keith said, as he broke off the sealing-wax. "The stopper is tight. You see, it won't come out. I will seal it properly to-morrow. Meantime, we ought to be thinking of starting for church."

"How shall we go?" said Elsie.

"Couldn't we sail up in the 'Waterwitch'?" suggested Pauline.

"Mademoiselle," said Tom, "a beneficent providence has anticipated your Sabbath-breaking tendencies. There's no wind."

"We might walk," said Violet, "it is such a beautiful day."

"Won't you find it a long way?" Keith asked her. "It is pretty nearly five miles."

"They might come back in the 'tub,' with Duncan and the maids," was Tom's suggestion, which solved the difficulty.

Upon reference to the elders, this plan was adopted, and they all set out to walk to church through the woods and along the shady ways by the lochside. Mr. Keith took Violet under his special charge, and the others all came along together; but somehow Keith and Pauline always found themselves side by side. Sir Peter Fergus, among his other hospitalities, had offered the Rosebank party the use of the Castle pew; and so they found themselves, on their arrival, comfortably seated in a shady alcove, out of sight of the congregation. The preliminary services over, the preacher read out his text. He was a young man, the son of the "minister," and had

greatly distinguished himself during his university career. He had won a Balliol Scholarship, and was now a Fellow of an Oxford College. The Rev. Walter Maitland, M.A., was tall and spare in figure, with a fine intellectual countenance, full of earnestness and manhood. His voice was clear and resonant; he spoke simply and unaffectedly, and with evident absorption in his subject.

"'With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.'

"We are somewhat accustomed, my brethen, to consider spiritual life so distinct from physical life as to have nothing in common with the inexorable laws of nature. That the sequences of natural phenomena should be inevitable does not surprise us, but we are far from habitually recognising the corresponding automatism of spiritual laws. Yet the sacred writers enunciate these laws with scientific precision as absolute certainties covering the whole field of man's activity, recognising no distinction between spiritual and other concerns of life. In fact there can be no greater mistake than to imagine that we can play fast and loose with non-sensible any more than with sensible phenomena, with

ideas, with moral and spiritual any more than with material interests, And yet no mistake is more common. We talk of "turning over a new leaf." But what fair inscription on the new leaf will abolish the scrawls and blots of the old? You cannot tear out the leaves of the Book of Life. We unconsciously trust to the future to remedy the self-indulgence of the present, forgetting that the future is what we make it, and that in the future, no less than in the present, 'sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' No. The living present, no less than the dead past, must bury its dead; and to carry over the deficit of life means moral and spiritual bankruptcy. In a word, we are much given to expecting to reap harvests we have not sown, to gather good fruit from corrupt trees, to secure results in life to which we have not contributed. But what says the Master? 'Be not deceived, whatsoever a man soweth *that* shall he also reap.'

"We may take the words we have read, as the expression of a great spiritual law, far-reaching and inexorable:—'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' And we see at once from its mode of statement that

it covers the whole life of man. It is one of the many reciprocal dualisms of the Gospels, all tending to the same end:—'Give and it shall be given unto you.' The outflow of life, so to speak, is the measure of its inflow. We have to put ourselves out at interest in life; to give—not merely things external to us—but ourselves; if we would receive more abundantly. 'He that loseth his life shall save it.'

"We cannot remain inert amid the spiritual exchanges going on around us. Nature is ever at work, building up her manifold life-forms or unbuilding them, breaking them down when they no longer fulfil their assigned function in her economy. When any form ceases to give out its due contribution to the general store, to take part in the general life; when it becomes inert, isolated from the normal matter-exchanges going on around it—then corruption, disintegration has set in. And so, when it measures its life by itself, as it were, it ceases to have any life to measure. And when a man's own existence—his own interest, his own happiness—are his measure of life, his life is assuredly measured unto him again in spiritual and moral degradation and dissolution. . . . . ."

As the preacher read out his text, Hugh Crawfurd settled himself in the corner of his pew to think of Pauline and what he should say to her when he met her, as he supposed he should do, after service. But the speaker's individuality was too strong for this, and Hugh found himself listening, in spite of himself and in spite of his inability to understand any religious exercise not couched in the shibboleths of Little Zion. His father, on the other hand, found the sermon a veritable "season of refreshing," and described it by means of various Scriptural metaphors, which need not be set down here. But to come back to Hugh. It was something new to him to find it laid down from the pulpit that this life had a value of its own, apart from any other, and he could not take in the idea all at once. It was not the spiritual twaddle he was used to in sermons, so his ideas of the preacher's meaning were somewhat vague; but the text, as a formula with which he was familiar, began to haunt him, and then, by some obscure association of ideas, the words of Violet's song began to haunt him as well, and all through the rest of the sermon they kept unceasingly recurring with every pause in the preacher's address—

"Till I shall be sleeping
In the cold dark grave"—

till he felt as though he could bear it no longer, but must rise and leave the church. That, however, could not be thought of; and in due time the service came to an end.

"Now for Pauline," said Hugh to himself as he followed his father and mother out of the church, "it's lucky I got Violet away."

And then a storm of suppressed fury filled his mind, for there—not a dozen feet off—was his wife coming towards him with Mr. Keith and Elsie. Mrs. Crawfurd was no less astonished at this unexpected apparition; but, mastering the situation as she considered, she was on the point of addressing Violet as Mrs. Dunbar, and was only saved from making a fool of herself, and perhaps bringing about a scandalous explanation, by an accident.

Violet had not seen the effect her appearance produced upon her husband. She had caught sight of Mrs. Crawfurd, and her first impulse was to avoid the meeting. But, in stepping hurriedly back, she tripped on the raised turf-border of the churchyard path and fell heavily on her side, striking against a headstone as she went down.

Then there was a commotion; and, although Violet was soon on her feet again, she was evidently much shaken; and Mrs. Crawfurd, who was sincerely sorry that the accident had happened and as sincerely glad to be of service to "Keith's wife," came to the rescue in her own way:—

"You had better let her come with us, Archibald, and some of you can drive up for her in the afternoon."

"What do you think, Keith?"

"I think she ought to rest before she goes home."

"Very well, Mrs. Crawfurd," said Mr. Keith, "I think we must avail ourselves of your kindness."

"And Dr. Dunbar had better come as well, to look after her," Mrs. Crawfurd added in her newly-found graciousness.

Just then Mr. Keith caught sight of Hugh, standing in the background. He went over to him and whispered:—

"Perhaps, Hugh, you had better go down to Rosebank with Tom—you will be out of the way."

"Thanks," said Hugh, "I will."

Here the elder Mr. Maitland came up with his son and Sir Peter Fergus, and, on finding what had occurred, insisted that Violet should not attempt to walk to Glenfinlas, but should rest in the Manse till she could be sent for. This arrangement was at once adopted by Keith, whose dictum was, of course, final. So Violet was handed over to the ladies of the Manse, who made much of her after their own pleasant fashion. Keith went to the Manse as well, and spent a pleasant afternoon with his old friend Walter Maitland. Hugh went with Tom and Elsie and Pauline, and Sir Peter insisted on carrying off the uncles to lunch at the Castle. And so it happened that, after all, Mrs. Crawfurd got no opportunity of solving the mystery of Violet's appearance at Loch Dhuil.

Hugh, however, did not get so much of Pauline's society as he had promised himself. Tom, at a hint from Elsie, who wanted to talk to Hugh about Violet, monopolised the young lady completely; so that, by the time they reached the boat, Hugh had hardly spoken a dozen words to her. In the boat, he found himself at the tiller with one of the maidservants on either hand. Elsie devoted herself to Kirsty,

and Pauline established herself in the bow behind Tom, who took an oar with Duncan. Not till well on in the afternoon did he get Pauline to himself, and then he did not make very much of the opportunity. They were left alone in the terrace: Tom and Elsie had gone into the house to make arrangements about going for Violet. Hugh and Pauline strolled about the lawn for a time, and then went into the laboratory. He complimented her on her picture:—

"What are you going to do with it?" he asked.

"I am painting it for Dr. Dunbar."

"He ought to feel highly honoured," said Hugh. "I know I should if I were in his place."

"It is I who am honoured," she said. "I owe him much more than that for his kindness."

"Ah, Dunbar has a way of being very kind to young ladies, as doubtless Miss Danby could tell you."

"Do you know, Mr. Crawfurd," said Pauline suavely, but looking him full in the eyes, "I don't exactly believe that story. Besides, you

forget that I have had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of—of 'Miss Danby,' as you call her."

This direct attack disconcerted Hugh, who began to have an uneasy feeling that perhaps Pauline knew the real state of the case.

"But it is just possible," he stammered out, "that Miss Danby may have her own reasons for not giving you her full confidence in the matter."

"That is to say, Mr. Crawfurd,"—Pauline spoke with the same directness as before—"that Violet—I may call her Violet, since she is my friend; I am proud to have her for a friend—it is at least to insinuate that she is untruthful. Do you think it a man's part to slander a woman—and in her absence, too? Besides, you also forget that, even if I had not known Violet, still I know Keith Dunbar. The man who has treated Violet as her husband has done, must be a miserable coward—unless he is so wretchedly blind as not to see anything of her worth. Dr. Dunbar is at least neither blind nor weak. Doubtless you have excellent reasons for making these suggestions, but I never listen to accusations against my friends."

Hugh had never seen Pauline animated before,

consequently he had never seen her look so beautiful as during her delivery of this treatise "*De Amicitia.*" And this eager advocacy on Keith's behalf, instead of reassuring him, as it would have done had he known anything about women, disquieted him greatly and made him think that the two had a much greater degree of mutual understanding than was the case. The chance emphasis which Pauline happened to put on the word "excellent" misled him as to the extent of her knowledge of Violet's affairs. Tom used to tell a story of a man who couldn't open his mouth without putting his foot in it. The story exactly illustrated Hugh's frame of mind on this occasion. He must needs fulfil the measure of his iniquities by a totally gratuitous sneer—this time levelled at Pauline herself.

To divert the conversation, she had taken up the blue glass bottle from Keith's writing-table, and was telling him all about it, laying especial stress on the poisonous nature of the compound, and what she considered Keith's bravery in working with it, and chancing the danger, in the hope of doing some good with it after all. Hugh interrupted her:—

"Doubtless his labours do him honour." He

really could not help sneering. "You seem wonderfully well informed about him too."

Pauline felt the rudeness without exactly seeing its force.

"I have had ample opportunity," was all the reply she vouchsafed.

But Hugh could stand this no longer. He felt he was making a fool of himself, and he wanted to get somewhere out of the way, where he could think over the situation quietly.

"I think I will go," he said.

"Hadn't you better wait, and go up with the waggonette?"

"No thank you, I would rather walk."

So they went round to the road, and, leaving messages for the others, Hugh departed. He had just sufficient presence of mind left to say, as he went off, that he would probably call on the morrow.

Before he had gone very far, Hugh left the road, and, striking into the wood, found a comfortable place for a rest; lighting a cigar, he set himself to think out the situation, but he was sorely puzzled.

"How much does she know?" he asked himself, over and over again—only varying it with,

"I wonder if they are engaged? Keith, Keith! —nothing but Keith and Violet. I wish they were both——"

He sat there a long time, but could make nothing of the case. He only got madder and madder, especially with his wife for coming to Rosebank. "Who ever would have thought of that?" he grumbled to himself. By-and-by he heard the waggonette coming, and half got up, meaning to ride with Tom. But when he saw that Tom had the girls with him, he kept back till they were well out of sight. Then he rose to go, but by the time he reached the road he remembered he had left his stick at Rosebank

"Shall I go for it?" he muttered, "it will be an excuse for to-morrow." He walked a few paces towards home, when a new idea seemed to occur to him, and he stopped, walked backwards and forwards irresolutely for a few minutes, then turned back towards Rosebank. "I may as well get the stick after all," he said, half aloud as if to assure himself of his mission. "Let me see, it would be in the laboratory I left it." As at matter of fact he had left it in the house, but some people like to keep up appearances even with themselves.

When Hugh reached Rosebank, he went at once to the laboratory, although it would have been more in keeping with the proprieties if he had looked into the hall as he passed. However, he persuaded himself that the stick was in the laboratory and he looked for it there. He went all round the room without seeing his stick. He could scarcely have seen it if it had been there, for he hardly took his eyes off the bottle on Keith's table. He found another bottle, too, in one of the windows, lying carelessly in a corner. It was exactly similar to the one on the table. This he put furtively in his pocket. Then he came across a small corked phial. This he emptied at the sink, and was going to fill it from the bottle in his pocket when he changed his mind. He got the bottle from the table, but the stopper was difficult to get out; then he tried the other bottle—that stopper was stiff too. At last he got one out, filled his phial, filled the bottle up with water (taking care all the while not to smell it), and placed the bottles, as he thought, where he found them. Then he left the room, taking the phial with him.

Hugh had got possession of the poison. What he should do with it was a question for

after-consideration. But his adventures were not yet over. To keep up appearances with himself, he went into the house for his stick, passing through the entrance-hall into the passage beyond. Hearing the click of a door-handle further down the passage, he promptly slipped through an open bedroom-door on his right, shut it softly behind him and fastened it with the catch. Then he stood by the mantelshelf, with the bottle in his hand, and waited. He heard the footsteps come down the passage and die away in one of the front rooms on the other side of the house. Then he noticed a cloak hanging on a chair, which cloak he seemed to recognise. Mechanically he put the bottle on the mantel while he went to look at the cloak. It was Violet's. Then he got impatient, and, not daring to go out by the front while that person was about, he at last got out of the bedroom window and went away. And not till he had nearly reached Glenfinlas did he remember that he had left the poison behind him in Violet's room. His first impulse was to go back for the bottle. But his dread of detection made him irresolute, and his irresolution was reinforced by a thought which, however, he would not allow to take

definite shape in his mind. But it was there, and ugly enough it was. It was this:—that Violet very likely would not notice the bottle (this he emphasised), but that, if she did meddle with it, Keith would be accused of her death, and thus they would both be out of his way together.

His next care was to get home unseen, so that no one should know the time of his arrival. This he managed to do. He established himself in a lounge-chair in the garden, with a book, as though he had been there all the afternoon. And in that posture the Rosebank folk saw him as they passed on their way home.

"Dear Hugh! dear, dear Hugh!" Violet murmured as she saw him. "How I wish I could come to you, my poor dear boy!"

CHAPTER XII.

SABBATH EVENING.

"They love not poison that do poison need."
King Richard II.

HUGH CRAWFURD'S meditations were not enviable. He was not exactly comfortable, to begin with; and his thoughts hardly got pleasanter as he dwelt on them. As the waggonette rolled by on the high road, he was near enough to hear the murmur of their happy, careless talk, and the thought struck him in full force of what that pleasant carelessness was to turn to at Rosebank. For one of these pleasant companions, at least, death was waiting; for the others, mourning and desolation. The thought of the woman he had loved—of her gentle trusting ways—her beautiful happy spirit, and of the happy life they had lived together—came over him like a flood, and he would have given the world to have undone his afternoon's work. The leaving of the bottle no longer appeared an

accident:—for—alas!—how had he come to have the bottle at all? More than ever came the haunting words of Violet's song. He could hear the dreamy waltz refrain:—

"Night comes so soon—
Night comes so soon."

Had the night fallen upon that bright sunny spirit? Then the other words took possession:—

"Till I shall be sleeping
In the cold dark grave."

And with them the stern recurrences of the preacher's words:—

"With what measure ye mete——"

Alas! what measure had he dealt out to his innocent, trusting wife? What a fate had he prepared for Keith, who, so far from wronging him, had loyally kept his secret under great provocation. He was a murderer in intention—by default at the very least, for he might have gone back for that bottle, and have thrown it into the sea. Perhaps it was not too late! But no, he could not expose himself. And so the weary strife went on. He was unfortunately only too much accustomed to waves of intense feeling resulting in very incommensurate action. Indeed, this very agony was in its way a luxurious excitement, but there was a fair amount of

reality about it too, and Hugh was ready to do anything to undo his wicked work, except confessing himself the author of it.

The tea-bell rang, and, always on the principle of keeping up appearances, he went in at its summons, although the effort was almost too much for him. But it brought him a chance, as it seemed—though he hardly knew whether it was a relief or not—when his mother, finding he had no news of Violet, announced her intention of going to Rosebank.

"You shall drive me down this evening," she said. "These accidents are very awkward sometimes, and I should like to be sure that no harm has come to the girl."

At anyrate it was a chance for him to go to Rosebank again, without laying himself open to any suspicion, and, in sheer terror, Hugh grasped at this one hope of escape from the consequences of his action. Would he be in time? That was the question. And yet, he dreaded to come near the house. Would it be in darkness—still with the silence of death? Oh! if he were once well through with this, Pauline might marry whom she liked, for him, and he would make it up to Violet. But no. He found nothing unusual

about the house when he drove up to the porch and assisted his mother to alight.

Hugh had framed no very definite plan of action, except that, after he had taken the trap to the stable, he would try and get hold of Violet and persuade her to take him to her room for a talk, and that he would then be able to possess himself of the bottle. But he got no opportunity of putting his plan into execution. Tom and Keith came out as Hugh drove up, and, while Keith conducted Mrs. Crawfurd into the house, Tom went round with Hugh to the stables. They came back through the house, down the passage Hugh had been in in the afternoon. The same bedroom-door was standing ajar. As they passed, Hugh made a movement to go in.

"I want to speak to Violet," he said.

"Here, you beggar," said Tom, catching his arm "that is not her room."

"That is Violet's cloak on the chair."

"Very likely. Those girls are always fooling about each others' rooms. But that room is Miss Carmichael's."

But the glimpse he had of the room was sufficient to show Hugh that the bottle was gone. He had little hope now. He could only

resolve not to betray himself whatever happened. Mechanically he followed Tom into the entrance-hall, which was the general sitting-room of the establishment. It was a pretty room, hung round with pictures, except on the frontside, which was one immense window built out in a bay right across the verandah. In this window Elsie and her father sat talking to Mrs. Crawfurd. Keith stood behind Elsie's chair, talking to Mr. Carmichael. Hugh had just time to take in all this, as he stood with Tom on the highest of the two steps leading down into the room, when Violet and Pauline entered together from the porch which extended from one end of the great window. As they went up the room to join the others, Hugh found himself beside Pauline. *She had the bottle in her hand.*

Pauline, however, passed Hugh with a bow, and went right up to Keith.

"See what I have found in my room," Hugh heard her say. "Why do you put beautiful scent like that into nasty poison-bottles? I am sure it is a poison-bottle—it is so ugly," and as she spoke she removed the stopper, and raised the bottle to her face.

Hugh was paralysed with terror. He stood

rooted to the spot. He could not go and tear the bottle out of her hand. He could not cry out. Not even for her life could he expose himself to suspicion. He turned his head away and waited—waited to hear her fall. But he heard no fall. What he heard was Keith's voice in sharp surprise.

"Scent! in that? Allow me," and Keith got possession of the bottle. Again Hugh felt the horrible dread.

"What is the matter with you, Hugh?" said Mrs. Crawfurd, who happened to look his way just at the time.

"Nothing," said he, pulling himself together by sheer instinct of self-preservation. He moved over beside his mother, and listened with averted head for the heavier fall he expected now. But But Keith did not fall. He smelt at the bottle, and an expression of intense bewilderment came over his face. This was succeeded by a smile of amusement as he handed the phial back to Pauline.

"You must ask Tom," he said.

"Well, what is Tom to be asked now?" queried that worthy in a tone of aggrieved virtue.

"Did you put this in my room?"

"No, certainly not. I know nothing about it," and Tom took the bottle and sniffed at it in his turn. Keith's amusement increased as he watched Tom's bewilderment. For Tom was evidently bewildered.

"It is uncommonly like that precious discovery of yours, Master Tom," said Keith.

"Like!" said Tom. "It is my discovery. And yet! I don't understand it at all. No one knew of this but yourself. I never put any of the stuff in that bottle. In fact, Miss Pauline, you had better ask Keith to explain."

"No," said Keith, in answer to Pauline's look of enquiry. "I cannot make it out any more than Tom."

"What is your discovery, Tom?" Elsie wanted to know.

Tom looked wise, and shook his head.

"I will exhibit it to morrow," he said.

Here Mr. Carmichael interfered.

"By-the-by," said he, "whose bedroom-door was it that was fastened?"

"Mine," said Pauline.

"I say, Hugh," Tom called out, "did you meet any suspicious characters in your travels

this afternoon? When we got home, Miss Carmichael's bedroom-door was locked on the inside, the window was open, and there were footmarks in the flower-beds below."

"No," said Hugh, "appearing to reflect. "I met no one, but then I walked up most of the way by the beach."

"Ah!" said Tom, "that was why we didn't see you, I suppose."

"Oh, as for that," said Hugh, "I saw you pass after I got home."

Tom said nothing more out loud, but Keith and Pauline seemed to hear a word beginning "with a big-big D." Evidently Tom did not quite believe his statement.

"I wonder," said Mr. Carmichael, "if there can be any connection between the locked door and the mysterious bottle? I suppose, Mr. Crawfurd, you cannot throw any light on the subject?"

Hugh shook his head.

"Mr. Crawfurd was gone before we were," said Pauline, "and the door was all right when I left, and the bottle wasn't there either."

Hugh, in fact, was completely mystified himself. The contents of the bottle were evidently inno-

cuous ; and yet he knew what he had put in it, and he almost shuddered as he thought of it. But he was relieved nevertheless. That he had allowed himself to meditate murder did not trouble him so long as he was free from the dread of the murder itself. But he got no leisure to think. There was a general adjournment out of doors, and in the confusion Hugh and Violet were not noticed, and presently found themselves alone in the room. Of course, the the first thing Violet did was to throw her arms round Hugh's neck and kiss him. And, as for Hugh, the fatal plasticity of his nature so readily responded to surrounding circumstances, that in five minutes he was on his old terms with Violet, as though he had never loved another woman or meditated the death of this one.

"Now, dear," she said, "let us go and have a nice talk. And you—you must have a smoke, Come with me." And she led him down the passage and across the kitchen into a passage beyond ; then, opening a door, ushered him into the laboratory.

"This is the smoking-room of the establishment," she said. "Now you must light up at once, for I want to come and sit on your knee."

Hugh settled himself in Keith's chair and lit a cigar, and Violet sat on his knee as she had said. But he was not quite comfortable. Here, in the very scene of his temptation, he could not quite rid his mind of all trace of the day's agitations. There was the fatal bottle on the desk in front of him, and it fascinated him. He could not keep his eyes off it. He had meant asking Violet how she came to be at Rosebank? When she was going to Scarsdale—and so forth. But he could do nothing but kiss her absently now and then, and look thoughtfully at the bottle as he smoked. Again Violet's influence became paramount, at least for the time being. He began to think of plans for being more with her. But none of his plans involved acknowledging the marriage, or any exposure of his own conduct —any confession of his wrong. He was roused from his meditations by Violet, who began laughing softly to herself.

"I am laughing at that funny little bottle," she said. "It is full of a new poison, only nobody has been killed by it yet. And Mr. Tom—he is always making fun, you know—wanted me to kill myself with it for the benefit of science. But there is somebody nicer than

science to live for. You wouldn't have your poor little true wife poisoned, would you, dear ?"

And Hugh felt quite virtuously indignant with Tom Challoner for his wicked tendency to practical jokes.

CHAPTER XIII.

DR. ANDERSON.

"A little sorrow, a little pleasure,
Fate metes us from the dusty measure
That holds the date of all of us;
We are born with travail and strong crying,
And from the birth day to the dying,
The likeness of our life is thus."

A. C. Swinburne.

ON Monday morning, when the letters arrived Mr. Keith and Mr. Carmichael decided to return to town with the afternoon steamer.

"Couldn't I go instead of you, sir?" said Tom to Mr. Keith.

"Yes, certainly, as far as that goes; there is nothing pressing. I am really going for company to Carmichael. You can relieve me some other time. Meanwhile you need not come up unless I write for you. You have no objection, I suppose, to stay and help Keith to take care of the ladies?"

"Oh dear me, no," said Tom, laughing. "Only I thought perhaps the firm might consider themselves entitled to my valuable services."

"It is just possible," said the senior partner,

smiling gravely, "that the firm may survive your temporary absence. It is all right, Tom; take your holiday while you have the chance. Later on, I may want you to take entire charge, while your father and I take a holiday together. It is many a year since we had that pleasure. Now will you ask Mrs. Hugh Crawfurd if she will speak a minute?" (*Anglicè*—favour me with a few minutes' conversation). Mr. Keith always avoided using Violet's assumed name, and his household followed his example—preferring to call her by her Christian name only, when her rightful name could not be used. Latterly, someone christened her "Dame Violet," and the name was accepted as a happy compromise.

"Mrs. Crawfurd," said Mr. Keith, when Violet came into the library, "Mr. Carmichael and I have occasion to go to town for a few days, and we wish you, as the only married lady in the house, to take charge of our girls till our return. Will you oblige us?"

"Certainly, Mr. Keith, it is very kind of you to propose it. After all, it seems there is an advantage in being married."

And thus Mr. Keith postponed Violet's departure until after his return at least.

"I have asked Elsie," he continued with a smile, "to mention to your respected mother-in-law, that, having you here, I did not think it necessary to place the young ladies under her protection, as I should otherwise have done." (This was Mr. Keith's method of letting Mrs. Crawfurd know his opinion of her daughter-in-law.) "If it should happen that any of you are ill, you will find her a most kind and capable woman. I am not sure, do you know, that you would not find it a good speculation to be ill yourself, and to let her nurse you."

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Keith, but then I am quite content to leave my position in my husband's hands. I have no doubt he will do what is right."

Duncan took the two uncles off in the "tub." Keith and Pauline had arranged to go out sketching, and were standing on the lawn with their gear in their hands, talking to Violet and Elsie, and watching the seniors climbing into the steamer. They saw the boat cast off, and the steamer gliding down the loch, till a headland shut her from their sight. Then, as they stood talking they were aware of Tom coming to them from the laboratory with a bottle in his hand.

"I promised to show you my discovery," said he, "as he reached the group. "I think, myself, it is an improvement on Keith's, and it is not half so dangerous." He had a difficulty with the stopper, but it yielded to his strong fingers. "How do you like it, Miss Pauline?"

Keith had been looking on amused, but all at once he noticed the formula on the label :—

"Good God!" he exclaimed, "it's the wrong bottle," and before Pauline could take it, he had snatched it away. But in doing this, he brought it too near his face, and inhaled the deadly fumes. Yet even with his failing senses he had thought for the others, and, with it, presence of mind to throw the bottle away from them over the low sea-wall, before he fell headlong on the grass.

No one fainted. No one shrieked. They stood for a second or two fascinated. Then, without a word, Tom rushed off to the laboratory to find a certain drug Keith had mentioned as a possible antidote. Pauline sat down upon the grass and raised his head upon her lap; Elsie chafed his hands; while Violet ran for water, and alarmed the servants, who came running out. But all their remedies were of no

effect. Keith lay there, to all appearance, dead.

"Get me the sails for the 'Waterwitch,' Kirsty—I must go for the Doctor. Mary, yoke the ponies, and drive up for Mrs. Hamilton or Mrs. Crawfurd. See about it, Elsie. Violet bring some rugs. We won't take him in; but keep him warm. He will be better here in the air. Now keep up your hearts, girls—he can't have had much, and it's time enough to despair when there is no hope." And Tom was gone.

For a few minutes Pauline was alone with Keith. All around her shone the great beauty she had so revelled in, and never had she had such feeling for it; never such microscopical vision for every detail—for every shrub on the lawn—every mass in the foliage of its fringing trees—every boulder on the beach—every ripple on the glancing water—every shadow in the soft white, slow-balancing clouds—every gleam and darkness on the far-off slopes. She saw Tom rush down with the sails, and noticed the angle at which the spars crossed over his shoulder. There was a line hanging loose, and she watched for him to trip over it. She noticed his headlong springing over the boulders—how he flung the sails into the punt, and with what a rush he

sent it off and sculled it out, shouting to Duncan, who was just getting back, to pull to the "Waterwitch" instead of coming ashore. She saw Duncan pull it up alongside just as Tom got the jib set; how the old man threw up his hands as he heard the news, and then straightened up into alertness, and sprang aboard like a youngster as Tom jammed down the helm, and the shapely craft sheered off. She seemed to feel the tense grip Tom put upon the tiller as the "Waterwitch" heeled over to leeward, and sprang away round the point with every stitch of her canvas set and every inch of it drawing.

She saw Violet come out of the house with a rug, and noticed as she descended the steps of the verandah, that she had slippers on. "Then she was not going out this afternoon," was Pauline's thought. Violet brought the rug and spread it over Keith, kissed Pauline silently, and went away. Then Pauline heard the waggonette drive off and wondered who had gone with it. Then Violet came back with another rug.

"Are you tired, dear?" she said. "Shall I——?"

"No, dear," said Pauline, wistfully, looking up with sad, dry eyes, "let me keep him while I can. Unless—unless—" And the thought of all Mrs. Crawfurd's talk came into her mind. "Tell me: is he—is he your husband?"

"My husband!" said Violet, in astonishment "Certainly not. Whatever should make you think that?" She passed her hand over Keith's forehead. "I do believe he will come round, I will go and tell Elsie." And she kissed Pauline again and went away.

"Mine!" said Pauline, softly to herself, as she kissed Keith's pale forehead. "Oh, my darling, my darling! I knew you were mine."

Kirsty came out and sat down by Pauline.

"Eh, my bonnie lad!" she said softly, "the brawest and the kindest lad that ever was! Sir's me! sir's me!" ("sorrow's me!"—cf. the English "woe is me!") She too passed her hand over his forehead: "The Lord be praised! I'm thinkin' he's better nor he was. Eh, ma dawtie, but it's richt prood he wad be gin he kent ye wer' haudin' him! Sir's me! but he worshipt the very grun' ye trod on." And the old woman's words were not without their comfort for

Pauline afterwards—at the time, she scarcely noticed them.

Elsie came back with Violet, and wanted to relieve Pauline, who only shook her head. So they sat down beside her, and cried softly; but she looked out to sea with dry eyes.

How long Pauline sat there with Keith's head in her lap she could not have told. The others came and went. She could only sit still. The waggonette returned as it went. There was no one at Fernbrae, and Mrs. Crawfurd was not at home. Then the "Waterwitch" rounded the point and made for the beach. There was no stopping to moor her and come ashore in the punt. Tom ran her right up on the shingle, and a man jumped out and ran up the lawn, followed by Tom. This was the doctor—a middle-sized, clever-looking man with a long brown beard and heavy moustache. He examined Keith carefully, felt his pulse, pushed up his eyelids, and looked at his eyes:—

"I think he'll do," was his verdict, "but I can't be sure yet. Have you a bed warm?"

"Yes," said Elsie, "it is all ready."

So Keith was carried in, and Tom and the doctor put him to bed; and by-and-by the

doctor came out and announced that, though his patient could not be considered out of danger, there was every hope of his eventual recovery.

"And now, Miss Elsie, if you will give me something to eat, I shall be glad. I have had nothing since breakfast. And mind, I shall expect all you ladies to grace the meal. I want to give you your instructions." And the doctor vanished into the bedroom again.

"Now, Tom," he said, "can you show me Keith's notes on this substance?"

"They are in the laboratory," said Tom. "Shall we go there?"

"We may as well just ask one of the ladies to take charge while we go."

Tom brought Pauline, and the doctor and he adjourned to the laboratory and got out Keith's manuscripts.

"Hm! I really don't know what to say," the doctor remarked as he turned over the papers, "but, as far as I can judge, he is going on all right for the present. But look here, Tom, how on earth did this happen? I always thought Keith a model of carefulness."

Tom told the story from beginning to end, and

exhibited his own bottle standing on Keith's desk.

"The bottles must have been changed," said the doctor. "Who could have done it?"

"This bottle was in its place yesterday afternoon just before we started," said Tom. "I happened to come through this way, and I looked at it. It had all my daft formula, and I smelt it too, before I put it back in the window." And Tom went on to tell about the bottle in Pauline's room, and the resemblance of its contents to his discovery, till the worthy doctor was more mystified than ever.

"Which is Miss Carmichael?" he said. And then:—

"And who is that beautiful grey-eyed young lady?"

It was no time for keeping secrets, so the doctor was put in possession of the facts.

"Then why isn't she with him?"

"Because he is such an infernal humbug," said Tom. "It's my belief, too, he has taken a fresh fancy. He wanted to spoon after Miss Carmichael all day yesterday."

"He was here yesterday, then? But what did Mrs. Hugh say to that?"

Here another story had to be told.

"Then I suppose you took him up with you, when you went for his wife?"

"No, he had gone just before."

"Walking?"

"Yes."

"Then you would pass him on the road?"

"No," said Tom, "and that surprised me, because he had only a few minutes' start. And that reminds me. He was here again in the evening, with his mother. He said he went by the beach, and was home before we passed. It struck me at the time as a damned lie. And yet, what did he want to tell a lie about it for? It didn't matter."

"Hm! looks like a lie, at anyrate. But, as you say, what was there to tell a lie about?"

"I wonder if he could have been up to any mischief?" said Tom. "And yet—he could not have made an appointment down this way—he did not know he was coming, and he left unexpectedly. He had been humbugging Miss Pauline, and I rather think she had slated him."

Here Mary came to call them to the dining-room. They visited the patient on their way and installed Kirsty in temporary charge. Then

the doctor asked for Miss Carmichael's room, and they went across to it, whereupon it occurred to Tom to tell about Hugh wanting to go in there to find Violet the night before.

"Oh, indeed!—said it was his wife's cloak, did he? Hm!—Just get me that bottle of yours, Tom. . . . . Now the bottle that was found in here." Pauline produced the latter. . . . "Has this bottle any previous history?"

"It was lying in the window full of spirits of wine."

"Ah! just so. . . . Will you smell those two, Miss Carmichael, and tell me if you notice any difference?"

"This is much stronger than the other," and Pauline held out the phial found in her room.

"Exactly. . . . And look here, Tom—did you put the label on your bottle before or after you filled it?"

"After."

"Indeed. How do you account for the stuff in this phial being so much stronger than yours?"

"I don't account for it at all," said Tom.

"I will tell you, then. This bottle was filled from yours. Then yours—half empty by this

time—was filled up with water. Some of the water flowed over the label where you see the ink has run. Now, whoever did that left the house *viâ* Miss Carmichael's room, and left the bottle as he went."

"By Jove! yes," said Tom.

"But," said the doctor, "we are no nearer the actual changing of the bottles."

"And I don't exactly see where the joke of this trick comes in," said Tom.

"That only shows us we haven't come to the end of the business yet. . . . . Well, shall we join the ladies?"

Elsie had the first innings:—

"How is Keith now, Dr. Anderson?" she asked.

"Just the same, my dear. I don't expect any improvement before morning, and should hardly believe in it if it came sooner. . . I shall have another look at him before I go, and I shall be back by nine o'clock or so. You must lend me your trap, Tom. . . . . You see, it is not as though I could foretell the course of the illness. I have to grope my way in the dark to a great extent, so I must be at hand. You, ladies, shall have your innings to-morrow. By-the-by, can

any of you cook? But, of course, you can, Miss Elsie."

"And I can," said Pauline; "I know what invalids want."

"And I can," said Violet.

"And we have a good cook besides," said Elsie.

"You are well off, indeed. Now, Miss Carmichael, you shall be cook to night. I will tell you what I want before I go. . . And will you" —addressing Violet (he could not call her "Violet," like the others, and he seemed to have their reluctance to use her assumed name)— "will you just put Miss Elsie to bed, and keep her there, so that she can be ready when I want her? She is your patient, remember. Keith will want to see her to-morrow, and you must have her looking blooming. . . Didn't you feel like fainting when this happened?"

"Yes," said Elsie.

"And you kept up?"

"Yes."

"You are a brave woman, my dear. But you would have done better to have gone off quietly: —for your own sake. I should not wonder if Keith is better before you are. . . . Now,

Tom, for you. You will go to bed at once, and sleep till I call you. I shall want you to watch the first part of the night, while I get my beauty-sleep. . . And understand, young ladies, you are all to go to bed properly to night. You will have your work cut out for you to-morrow, I quite expect. And now I must go and talk to Kirsty."

Pauline noticed in the doctor's air and manner something of the same vigilant controlled force and promptitude of resource that had struck her in Tom when he set off in the "Waterwitch." There was no weak troubling about consequences, but a certain intentness on what could be done in the present, and a sense of readiness for emergencies, which was very manful and comforting. All the girls felt it more or less, and were comforted thereby.

The trouble passed away with the night, and in the morning Dr. Anderson pronounced his patient out of danger.

"Now," he said to Pauline, as he went away, "he will wake, I think, in the course of the day, but when, I cannot say. As you were last in his thoughts, I want him to see you first when he wakes. He needs no watching now. Just

sit where he can see you, and read, or do any quiet work you like. And don't let him talk when he wakes. Stay!—is there anything he is particularly well-used to seeing you do?"

"He often watches me painting."

"Couldn't be better. Have your things here and be doing something, and put the picture where it will catch his eye at once."

Then he took leave of Violet.

"Now, Mrs. Crawfurd, your patient had better stay in bed to-day; but, as she doesn't need much nursing and you may have to relieve Miss Carmichael in the evening, you must take care of yourself. Be out of doors and enjoy yourself as much as you can, and mind you have a good sleep in the afternoon. If Mrs. Crawfurd, of Glenfinlas, should come over, just let her take command of the house and your patient, but not the other one. These elderly ladies want something to keep them out of mischief. You see, she might be making up a match between those young people in there. And if she brings her son with her, you can take charge of the young man, and keep *him* out of mischief."

The Doctor, it must be confessed, was a man of discernment.

Of course Mrs. Crawfurd (senior) arrived in the course of the morning; and equally, of course, she took command of the establishment. She also brought her son with her—rather against his will, for he was dubious as to the connection Keith's accident might have with his doings of Sunday. Mrs Crawfurd tried to oust Pauline from the sickroom, and to substitute Violet, on the ground that the latter, as a married woman, was—as laid down in her gospel according to the proprieties—alone eligible for the position. Pauline, however, was not to be moved, and so, while the old lady was busy, Violet had a long morning with her husband, and enjoyed it to her heart's content. She got him to take her out on the loch in the "tub." They drifted down a quiet bay in the morning sunlight, and Violet could talk of nothing but Pauline and Keith.

"He did it to save her," she said. "Was it not noble of him? Even if he had died, it would have been a noble death. He loves her, I am sure. What would you have felt, dear, if you had seen me just going to be poisoned?"

Hugh duly represented the required state of feeling, and Violet went on:—

"I could not be sorry enough, dear, because I

was so thankful it had not been your lot to snatch that dreadful bottle away from me. It did seem so hard and wicked of me."

Hugh, of course, expressed a coincident thankfulness, without, however, letting Violet understand how thoroughly the feeling was warranted in her case. In fact, he felt himself quite capable of a similar heroism. (N.B.—Duly reserving the right of recovery.)

"And she loves him too, dear. Is it not nice? She has been so devoted to him—so brave and helpful.—I am sure Dr. Anderson saw it, and that is why he made her nurse to-day. She never cried till she got to her own room at night, and then I believe she cried till morning. You should have seen her as she sat on the lawn, nursing his poor head ;—such a world of misery in her dry eyes. And yet she looked so brave too, and so proud of him."

Again Hugh offered a few remarks suitable to the occasion.

"And I think, too, Mr. Carmichael has taken a great fancy to Keith, and he will like him more than ever now he has saved her life, almost at the cost of his own. . . . . ."

Hugh began to think that he had played his

cards very badly. Perhaps that is rather a translation of his thoughts, for Hugh, poor fellow, knew nothing of whist, and would not have understood its metaphor.

END OF VOL. I.

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